



COALITION OF RESIDENTIAL EXCELLENCE

## Executive Director's Report April 2026

### Protecting Sibling Relationships In Foster Care Act

On April 29, 2026, U.S. Representatives Don Bacon (NE-02), Zach Nunn (IA-03), and Gwen Moore (WI-04), co-chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth, introduced the Protecting Sibling Relationships in Foster Care Act.

The Protecting Sibling Relationships in Foster Care Act would authorize \$10 million in federal appropriations over a five-year period and direct the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a competitive pilot grant program supporting specialized foster care models designed for large sibling groups, siblings with wide age

ranges, or those with complex needs. Eligible state, tribal, local, faith-based, and nonprofit entities could receive one of up to five grants to develop or expand models that increase the likelihood that siblings are placed together and remain together while in care. Grantees would collect and report placement data and outcomes to inform federal and state child welfare practice.

According to the press release on Congressman Bacon's website: "The bipartisan resolution recognizes April as National Foster Sibling Connections Month and highlights the importance of sibling bonds for youth in foster care. By calling on federal, state, tribal, and local agencies to prioritize joint placements and improve data collection, the resolution seeks to reduce trauma and ensure emotional stability for youth both during and after their time in care.'Keeping siblings together in the foster care system significantly increases their chance of having positive life outcomes,' **said Rep. Bacon, Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth Co-Chair.** 'As a foster-to-adoptive parent of a sibling group, this bipartisan foster care package helps address the unique challenges faced by families caring for sibling groups with large numbers, wide age ranges, and complex needs. We have a responsibility to support children in foster care with stable, loving homes that keep families connected."

In the press released concerning this legislation, **Rep. Nunn, Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth Co-Chair, states:** "When brother and sisters enter foster care, staying together can be the difference between stability and a traumatic disruption in a young life." He also stated: "I've worked with families navigating this system - and the biggest barrier to keeping siblings together isn't willingness, it's capacity."



[As a side note, Rep. Nunn and his wife adopted two foster care children in 2023. The sisters were ages 2 & 3.]

In the same press release, **Rep. Moore, Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth Co-Chair stated:** “The sibling bond is so important, and the foster care system must work to maintain it. But when siblings become separated in the foster care system, it can create more distress and pain for children and families. Our bipartisan legislation would help develop better tools to successfully keep siblings together.”

This bill funds the foster care models that can actually keep siblings together, and our resolution makes clear that Congress sees this as a priority.

**The following background is provided in the press release:**

The federal foster care system strives to place siblings together whenever possible, yet many children in care are separated from one or more of their brothers or sisters due to logistical challenges, varying ages, behavioral health needs, or limited placement capacity. Strong sibling relationships are widely recognized as a critical source of emotional support and stability for children navigating the trauma of family separation, but current federal law’s “reasonable efforts” requirement does not ensure specialized infrastructure or funding to support placement of large sibling groups, siblings with wide age ranges, or those with complex needs.

According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), states face significant barriers to placing siblings together, particularly when sibling groups are large, span wide age ranges, or require specialized care. Some reports estimate that as many as 75% of foster children are placed apart from one or more of their siblings.

This foster care package aims to help address those gaps by supporting foster care models better equipped to serve sibling groups.

The full text of the *Protecting Sibling Relationships in Foster Care Act* is available [here](#), and the resolution recognizing April as National Foster Sibling Connections Month is available [here](#).



**H.R. 4972 - Create Accountable Respectful Environments (CARE) for Children Act of the 119th Congress (2025-2026), aims to amend the Social Security Act to address the shortage of suitable foster homes. It focuses on enhancing oversight of child welfare programs to improve care environments. It focuses on enhancing oversight of child welfare systems to improve care environments. This legislation is separate from other similarly named healthcare for state-level “CARE Act” initiatives.**

As reported last month, CORE was well represented by our membership on March 17, 2026 when we were on Capitol Hill advocating for passage of H.R. 4972. Since we were there, additional contacts have been made toward finding bipartisan representation in the Senate to file a companion bill to the CARE Act. So far, a companion bill has not been filed.

Rep. August Pfluger [R-TX-11] signed on as a co-sponsor on April 13, 2026. That totals 23 cosponsors:

Florida	15
Mississippi	3
Texas	2
North Carolina	1
Tennessee	1
Virginia	1

### **Other Legislation:**

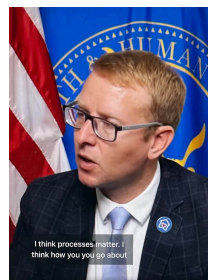
H.R. 6221 Fostering the Future for American Children & Families Act - 5 Cosponsors

H.R. 7259. Fresh Starts for Foster Youth Act - 2 cosponsors (last added 04/29/26)

H.R. 7419 Foster Care Stabilization Act of 2026 - 3 original cosponsors

**ACF Assistant Secretary Adams explains how reducing administrative burden for states child welfare agencies frees them from bureaucratic busy work and gives them more time to deliver real outcomes for kids and families.**

According to Adams “For too long, states have spent countless hours producing hundreds of pages of reports that went largely unread. That ends now.”



By cutting red tape, ACF hopes to empower states, who are on the front lines of child welfare and understand their communities better than anyone in Washington. They are best positioned to define what progress looks like — and we should trust them to do it.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=945267608392031>

On April 2, 2026, Alex Adams, Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services was interviewed by Hannah Anderson, Director, Healthy America Policy & Senior Director of Policy. The topic was:”Reforming Foster Care: A Home for Every Child.”

In this interview, Hannah talks with Alex Adams, Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services, about the urgent need to protect vulnerable children and keep the American Dream alive.

Adams explains that the ACF manages about 60 programs and tens of billions of dollars for child care, Head Start, child welfare, foster care, and adoption. He says the real goal goes beyond just providing benefits. It is about ensuring public policy helps children escape poverty, supports stable families, and creates real opportunities for them to move up in life rather than becoming dependent.

Hannah shares her own experience with programs that supported her family growing up, showing how important it is for these systems to work well. Adams points out that the best safety net helps families without taking their place, and that the government should focus on supporting work, self-sufficiency, and strong families. He talks about his efforts to guide the ACF with these ideas, especially by helping states use federal funds to give children more opportunities and remove obstacles that hold them back.

**For every 100 children entering foster care, only about 57 foster homes are available.**

A big part of the interview is about foster care. Adams warns that there are not enough foster homes for the children who need them. For every 100 children entering foster care, only about 57 homes are available. This means many states have to place children in hotels, short-term rentals, or government offices instead of with families. Adams explains that the administration is working to recruit more foster homes, keep fewer children from entering care unnecessarily, and update child welfare systems so states have better tools, data, and accountability. He also mentions President Trump's executive order on foster youth, which First Lady Melania Trump strongly supported, as an important step toward cutting red tape and helping children in the system.

The interview also covers a troubling issue Adams has faced: many states take Social Security survivor benefits that belong to orphaned children in foster care. Adams calls this so-called orphan tax unfair because it lets states use the last support a deceased parent leaves to pay themselves back for foster care costs. He praises Nebraska for stopping this practice and urges other states to follow, saying these benefits should help vulnerable children build a stable future instead of being taken by the state.

Adams also talks about the fight against fraud and abuse in federal child welfare and child care programs. He points out that some states have failed to oversee these programs, letting money meant for poor children be stolen through fake businesses, false enrollments, and other scams. Adams says the administration is working to stop fraud, bring back accountability, and make sure states treat federal money as carefully as any other taxpayer resource. He also argues for cutting outdated rules, saying they often get in the way of good families, providers, and state reforms.

This interview gives a clear look at how the Trump administration wants to change children and family policy. Adams talks about foster care, child welfare, fighting fraud, and cutting unnecessary rules, all with a focus on strong families, honest government, and real chances for children. The main message is that protecting America's children is about more than just funding programs. It is about making sure every child, no matter their situation, has a real chance at the American Dream.

The podcast is available at this link: <https://www.americafirstpolicy.com/issues/reforming-foster-care-a-home-for-every-child>

### **A Word From Elisha Hoggard, Chair of the Conference/Education Committee**

The Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches is seeking engaging presentations from educators for our upcoming CORE Conference. The conference planning committees will review and approve presenter applications and are seeking sessions that move beyond theory and provide practical, actionable strategies for child-caring professionals. Proposals must clearly demonstrate how participants will gain tools, techniques, or approaches they can implement in their daily work.

### **CORE Conference Proposal Expectations**

- We are looking for practical, actionable content.
- We prioritize sessions that provide takeaways participants can implement immediately.
- We value presentations that strengthen connection, culture, and sustainability in child-caring work.
- We are not seeking promotional presentations or sessions focused solely on theory without practical application.
- Interactive formats, discussion-based learning, and practical skill-building exercises are strongly encouraged.

Call for Presenters Link: <https://forms.gle/o1reg6zXfoK5idJp9> Due by 07/01/2026

## **Nominations for 2026 Catherine Hershey Awards**

With its inception in 2005, the Catherine Hershey Awards are national awards specifically for the residential education field. Administered by CORE, the Coalition for Residential Excellence, the awards are sponsored by the Milton Hershey School. Judges are individuals from the residential field who rank all submitted nominations with personal and program information removed.

Announcement to the award winner will be coordinated between CORE and the nominator. Following notification to the award winner, a letter will be sent providing details of the award presentation which will be held at the CORE National Conference, November 3-5, 2026. The conference is being held in Lake City, Florida, by our conference host The Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches. Travel expenses to attend the awards presentation will be the responsibility of the award winner and/or their nominator. All nominees will be notified and listed in the awards program.

The categories are:

- Administrator of the Year
- Educator of the Year
- Houseparent(s) of the Year
- Alumnus of the Year
- Student of the Year
- Trustee of the Year ( A CORE Award)
- Legislator of the Year (A CORE Award)

Awards Nomination Link:

<https://forms.gle/t4Jbs2qSpF3oRzBE9> Nominations due 07/01/2026

Welcome New Member

### **Shiloh Christian Ranch Shelbina, MO**

Shiloh Christian Children's Ranch has been operational since 1977. Mark Adkison is the Executive Director. Prior to accepting the role of agency head, he served for five years on the board of Directors. He has served as Executive Director for the past twenty-one years. During that period, there has never been an allegation of abuse on the campus.

The agency's website describes the program this way: "Located in America's heartland, grounded in Christian values and founded in Biblical teachings, Shiloh Christian Children's Home offers vulnerable children hope and healing in loving, traditional, family

homes. Shiloh's mission is to meet the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical needs of abused, neglected, and other at-risk children, ages birth to 15 throughout the United States." [Note: the age range is at the time of admission.]

At the time of my visit, there were 43 children in care. The home has 26 staff members. The administrative office is located in town and the split campus is located in a very rural setting about fifteen miles away. The two campuses have a seventy acre tract of land between them.

Cottages on the newer campus provide for both boys and girls in separate wings of the home. Each child has a private bedroom. The 9,000 square foot cottages include an open living area.

The very first home built on the lower campus in 1977 is now empty and will be demolished soon. A new 9,000 square foot cottage like those on the newer campus will be built in that location.

The Shiloh Christian School is also located on the lower campus. The two-story building previously served as a cottage for the care of children, but was subsequently repurposed as a school which exclusively serves residents in care.

The school is on the lower level of the Shiloh Guest Lodge (affectionally referred to as the "Bunkhouse"). Children coming into care are initially served by the on-campus Christian school where their educational needs can be comprehensively assessed and educational progress can be individually tailored to help students make educational gains to get them back to age-appropriate grade levels.

Currently, out of the 43 students currently in care, there is about a 50% division between public school and private Christian school. Home school is also an option for some students, but currently no one in care is participating in that tract except for children of one of the houseparent couples.

Children in care have opportunities to take part in many extracurricular activities. Examples from the past year include: football, softball, baseball, basketball, archery, cross-country, track, cheerleading, academic bowl competition, FCCLA National Honor Society, Student Government, See-You-At-The Pole, plays and musicals, field trips, and service projects.

There are also opportunities for residents to work and participate in activities in the local community. Shiloh children have donated their time to local food pantries, local “days-of-community” where they give back to residents and assist in repairs, maintenance, and other projects, job shadowing, and volunteering at nursing homes.

The home uses contract professional Christian counselors as well as local psychologist and outside counseling resources on an as needed basis. The home’s training curriculum for staff includes trauma informed care including TBRI (Trauma Based Relational Intervention).

Shiloh Children’s Ranch is not subject to licensing by the state of Missouri. They are accredited through Missouri Association of Christian Child Care Agencies.

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### **In Memoriam**

***Dr. Juston Gates Jr.***

**March 26, 1965 - April 23, 2026**



### **MBCH mourns passing of president, Juston Gates**

APRIL 23, 2026

BY **STAFF**

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** Story updated on April 24 & April 29.

**BRIDGETON, Mo. —**

The Missouri Baptist Children’s Home (MBCH) announced on April 23 that its president, Juston Gates, passed away during the previous night due to injuries from a hunting accident that occurred a week ago.

According to news outlets, Gates was injured during a turkey hunt near Mangum, in Southwest Oklahoma, when he was accidentally shot by one of his hunting companions, April 16. He was transported by air to OU Health in Oklahoma City in critical condition, but passed away a week later due to his injuries.

The MBCH released the following statement on April 23:

“It is with a heavy heart and great sense of loss that we announce the passing of our brother in Christ, devoted father, beloved pastor, and President of MBCH, Dr. Juston Gates. Dr. Gates was recently hospitalized for injuries sustained on a business-related hunting trip, and he eventually succumbed to those injuries on April 23, 2026 at 12:02am.”

The MBCH statement added, “Dr. Gates went to be with the Lord with his family standing by his side. He was well known for his love of and obedient service to Jesus Christ. He had a deep love for his family, both his family at home as well as his MBCH family. Dr. Gates will be greatly missed by all those who knew him, and we continue to welcome prayers for his family and friends, as well as for MBCH leadership as we mourn this great loss.”