

COALITION: SANDUSKY AND SYRACUSE SCANDALS SHOULD NOT DISTRACT CONGRESS FROM RESPONDING TO AMERICA'S EPIDEMIC OF CHILD ABUSE AND RELATED DEATHS

Bipartisan Bill Would Develop a Strategy for Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect Deaths; Experts Concerned That Widely Publicized Abuse Cases Are Obscuring Need for Wider Action.

WASHINGTON, DC (December 15, 2011) As the national news media continues to focus on the Sandusky and Syracuse child abuse allegations, a coalition of national experts applauded a bill introduced this week by U.S. Senators. **John Kerry (D-MA)** and **Susan Collins (R-ME)** and U.S. Representatives **Lloyd Doggett (D-TX)** and **Joseph Crowley (D-NY)** joined by ten members of the House Ways and Means Committee that could make a significant impact towards reducing fatalities resulting from child abuse and neglect, and make improvements throughout the child welfare system.

More than seven children die from abuse and neglect every day in America – some 2,500 a year – reflecting the estimated 50 percent undercounting in the officially estimated figure of 1,560. A child is abused or neglected every 36 seconds in the United States, yet only 40 percent of abused children with substantiated cases receive services, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Representatives of the National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths (NCECAD) today expressed concern that the current national media attention being paid to the Sandusky and Syracuse child abuse allegations would not create the needed additional pressure on Congress to deal with wider child death and abuse problems. Such focused attention on specific abuse cases often obscures the need for wider attention to the problem, according to the NCECAD experts.

Pointing to the need for multi-faced solutions, NCECAD members applauded the recently introduced *Protect Our Kids Act*, which would establish a commission to study and evaluate federal, state, and local public and private child welfare systems. *Protect Our Kids* would also develop a national strategy and recommendations for preventing child abuse and reducing fatalities resulting from child abuse and neglect. The full text of the legislation is available online at www.endchildabusedeaths.org.

Kimberly Day, spokesperson for the National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths, said: “It is important that the media is covering the most recent high profile and horrific child sexual abuse cases, but it is also important that the public understand that what they are hearing is only part of a larger problem of child abuse and neglect in the United States. The proposed bill will provide a national strategy for improving our child protection system by recommending practices that protect children and prevent abuse and neglect”.

“This legislation is an important step that Congress and our nation need to take in order to better protect our children from abuse and neglect,” said Senator Collins. “This is not a Democratic or Republican issue--this is an American issue--one that we can't wish away, but that we must face head on and work to eradicate. Our legislation would establish a commission to develop a comprehensive national strategy for reducing child abuse fatalities. An increased understanding

and awareness of child abuse and neglect can lead to improvement in agency systems and practices and help prevent future child abuse fatalities.”

Rep. Doggett, ranking member of the Human Resources Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over this issue stated, “Addressing this ongoing tragedy requires a better understanding of the causes of abuse and neglect and a determination of the most effective steps to prevent maltreatment. This bipartisan commission offers a way to develop a more coordinated, national response.”

“As a father to three young kids, it breaks my heart to hear the thousands of stories of children suffering from abuse or neglect every day. What’s worse is the alarming number of children who die each year from mistreatment. The simple fact is, even one child’s death from abuse, neglect or maltreatment is one too many,” said Rep. Crowley. “This is an issue of grave concern and one that deserves a national focus. That’s why I’m proud to fight alongside tireless advocates like the National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths, and I am glad to have worked with them and my colleagues in creating legislation that will help determine how we as a nation can better protect our children.”

Tamara Tunie (*Law & Order: SVU*) is garnering support for the bill by calling on citizens to sign the Coalition’s petition to Congress: “All it takes is a minute of your time to visit www.endchildabusedeaths.org and sign the petition asking your member of congress to support the Protect Our Kids Act. I did it, and so can you. Together, we can end child abuse and neglect deaths.”

To learn how you can help with the campaign to end child abuse and neglect fatalities, please visit www.endchildabusedeaths.org.

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ABOUT THE MEMBERS OF THE COALITION TO END CHILD ABUSE DEATHS

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world, with 145,000 members and 56 chapters. NASW works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies.

The National Center for the Review and Prevention of Child Deaths (NCRPCD) is a resource center for state and local child death review programs. The center provides technical assistance to help teams develop, implement and sustain a prevention-focused CDR process, training, strategic planning and program development for state and local teams, consultation to coordinate with other reviews, including fetal and infant mortality, domestic violence, serious injury, and maternal mortality, support for the network of CDR program leaders.

The National Children’s Alliance (NCA) is a professional membership organization dedicated to helping local communities respond to allegations of child abuse in ways that are effective and efficient – and put the needs of child victims first. National Children's Alliance provides training, support, technical assistance and leadership on a national level to local children’s and child advocacy centers and communities responding to reports of child abuse and neglect.

The Every Child Matters Education Fund (ECM) was founded in 2002 with the mission to make children's issues a political priority. To that end ECM has promoted the adoption of smart policies for children and youth. These include ensuring that children have access to affordable, comprehensive health care services, expanding early-care and learning opportunities and after-school programs, preventing violence, abuse, maltreatment and fatalities against children in their homes and alleviating child poverty.

The National District Attorneys Association (NDAA), founded in 1950, is the oldest and largest professional organization representing criminal prosecutors in the world. The National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse (NCPCA), a program of the NDAA was established in 1985. The NCPCA is staffed with professionals involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse, exploitation and computer facilitated crimes against children.

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