



**FIRST FOCUS**

MAKING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THE PRIORITY

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March 23, 2007

The Honorable Edward Kennedy  
Chairman, Senate Committee on Health,  
Education, Labor and Pensions  
SD-644 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

It is a pleasure to formally endorse the Keeping Parents and Communities Engaged Act. This important legislation recognizes the critical role played by families and communities in improving the academic success of our students. We applaud this bill and look forward to working with you toward its enactment.

First Focus believes, and research demonstrates, that we must meet the needs of students in and outside the classroom in order to bolster their success in school. A study commissioned by the America's Promise Alliance analyzed the impact of having five key resources in children's lives: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education, and opportunities to help others. Students with four or five of these resources were twice as likely as their peers with zero or one resource to get As in school, 40 percent more likely to volunteer, and twice as likely to avoid violence. The Keeping PACE Act is crucial because it will help to connect young people to an array of services and supports, thereby increasing their access to these and other important resources.

The debate surrounding the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act will appropriately center on issues surrounding accountability, teacher quality, national standards and other important topics. We thank you for raising the importance of parent and community engagement as well. Every child can succeed, but we must provide them with the tools to do so. By building stronger connections between parents, schools, and communities, the Keeping PACE Act will help the nation be stronger supporters of our students.

Chairman Kennedy, thank you for your leadership. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lesley  
President