

THE COALITION FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF UNPARENTED CHILDREN

Problem

Many tens of millions of children worldwide live without parents, with some 10-14 million institutionalized. And this number is growing. The plight of these unparented children is the largest unrecognized human rights crisis of the 21st century.

Domestic and international adoption provide the best solution for most unparented children. Adoption gives children the permanent, nurturing, legally stable parents they need. However, few countries with large populations of unparented children have a robust domestic adoption tradition and many countries impose severe restrictions on or altogether prohibit international adoption. This deliberately denies millions of children in need the possibility of growing up in nurturing homes. Although many believe that children will be best off if kept in their country or group of origin, there is no evidence that this is true. There is extensive evidence, however, that denying children a permanent nurturing home early in life causes severe cognitive, socio-emotional, and other harms that last the rest of their lives.

Solution

Members of Congress are currently drafting legislation to require the Department of State to revise its practices so that its Annual *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* includes violations of unparented children's rights, particularly the unnecessary holding of children in institutions and related denial of timely access to domestic and international adoption.

For more information on this important legislation, please contact Alex Manning with Arent Fox LLP at 202-857-6000 or alex.manning@arentfox.com.

Advocacy Initiative

As a broad coalition of child human rights experts and organizations, we advocate for children's most fundamental need, and most basic human right: to grow up in loving, nurturing families, with committed parents capable of providing unconditional love on an ongoing basis.

Coalition Members

Paulo Barrozo, Associate Professor of Law, Boston College Law School

Elizabeth Bartholet, Morris Wasserstein Professor of Law & Faculty Director, Child Advocacy Program, Harvard Law School

Cassie Statuto Bevan, Child Welfare Fellow, Field Center for Children's Research, Policy and Practice, University of Pennsylvania

Herbert A. Brail, President, American Academy of Adoption Attorneys

Kelly Dempsey, Child Welfare Attorney and Advocate, Dempsey Law, PLLC

Diane Kunz and Ann Reese, Co-Founders & Executive Directors, Center For Adoption Policy

Chuck Johnson, President & CEO, National Council For Adoption

Peter Leppanen, Strategic Advisor, Child Welfare Consultant

Elizabeth Styffe, Director, Saddleback Church Orphan Care Initiative