



Children's Advocacy Institute

Executive Director
Robert C. Fellmeth

Council For Children
Gary F. Redenbacher
Council Chair

Gary Richwald, M.D., M.P.H.
Council Vice-Chair
Robert L. Black, M.D.
John M. Goldenring, M.D., M.P.H., J.D.
Hon. Jan I. Goldsmith
Louise Horvitz, M.S.W., Psy.D.
Hon. Leon S. Kaplan
James B. McKenna
Thomas A. Papageorge
Blair L. Sadler
Gloria Perez Samson
Alan Shumacher, M.D.
Owen Smith

Emeritus Members
Birt Harvey, M.D.
Paul A. Peterson

Senator Robert Menendez
317 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

July 22, 2008

Re: S. 3277 — Support

Dear Senator Menendez,

We write to strongly support your S. 3277, which would fashion a “children’s budget” in order to identify, focus and discuss public investment in children. Our Children’s Advocacy Institute is an academic center based at the University of San Diego School of Law. We train law students in the practice of child advocacy, operate clinics representing children in the dependency and delinquency systems, and direct a law firm representing the interests of children statewide. Personally, I am active with the Boards of the National Association of Counsel for Children, Voices for America’s Children and the First Star Foundation.

As a society, we manifest our values by the subjects we choose to think about, to discuss, to examine. Regrettably, we do not look at federal investment in children in any systematic way. But is there any budget question of more importance, or more deserving of separate attention and high priority?

Here in California, CAI has examined public spending for children for years. Our *California Children’s Budget* is available at www.caichildlaw.org/childrens-budget.htm. We would respectfully commend it as an initial model for federal replication.

Our budget examines federal, state and local spending under eight categorical headings, separating out accounts. The chapters have two features commending federal replication. First, the accounts are preceded by condition indicators suggesting the current status of children and relevant trends. The discussion includes recent legislative changes and court precedents. This contextual material allows for some analysis of both public investment justification and outcome evidence. Then we present the accounts, and critically, we examine trends only with proper adjustment for population change and inflation. Examining raw numbers can be misleading. The number of children and taxpayers change annually, as does the value of federal monies expended.

Only by separating out investment in children can we monitor how we are—or are not—fulfilling our obligation to afford opportunity to those who follow us. We properly honor our forefathers for their sacrifices, and it is appropriate for us to pass it down the line—to honor them by following their example. We need to know how much we are investing, where, and to what effect as a first step in meeting that seminal obligation. Your measure begins that important venture.

Our Children’s Advocacy Institute respectfully urges an “aye” vote on S. 3277.

Very Sincerely,

Robert C. Fellmeth

Price Professor of Public Interest Law,
University of San Diego School of Law
Executive Director, Children’s Advocacy Institute

University of San Diego
School of Law
5998 Alcalá Park
San Diego, CA 92110
(619) 260-4806
(619) 260-4753 (Fax)

717 K Street
Suite 509
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 444-3875
(916) 444-6611 (Fax)

Reply to:
 San Diego
 Sacramento

www.caichildlaw.org

