



**MEDIA ADVISORY**

**Capitol Hill Briefing/News Conference**

**CONTACT: Dominic Slowey  
Slowey/McManus Communications  
781-710-0014**

**NEW STUDY: MOST STATES FAIL TO ADEQUATELY PROTECT THE LEGAL RIGHTS  
OF ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN**

*First Star, Children's Advocacy Institute Seek to Strengthen State/Federal Laws*

**State-By-State Grades Available**

(Washington, D.C.) – First Star and the Children's Advocacy Institute at the University of San Diego School of Law (CAI) will release a detailed new study that provides a state-by-state analysis of how well states are protecting the legal rights of abused and neglected children in foster care and dependency proceedings.

*A Child's Right to Counsel: A National Report Card on Legal Representation for Abused and Neglected Children (Second Edition)* provides grades for each state based on criteria established by child welfare experts. The report highlights progress that has been made in some states since the first study conducted in 2007, but concludes that too many states still leave children essentially voiceless during proceedings that have a profound impact on their lives. First Star and CAI will outline changes that are needed in federal and state laws to guarantee that these children are adequately protected.

**When: Thursday, October 15, 2009 at 1pm (EDT)  
Media can attend or participate via conference call.  
Media dial-in number: (866) 568-1400 toll-free or (512) 807-2400 Pass Code: 644920#**

**Where: U.S. Capitol Building - Room H-137**

**Who:** U.S. Rep. Fortnay (Pete) Stark, D-CA  
U.S. Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy, D-RI  
Amy Harfeld, First Star Executive Director  
Shalita O'Neale, Director of the Maryland Foster Youth Resource Center; former foster youth from Baltimore, MD, who spent 19 years in the system  
Elisa Weichel, Administrative Director & Staff Attorney, Children's Advocacy Institute  
Christina Riehl, Staff Attorney, Children's Advocacy Institute

**About First Star**

First Star is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit that improves the lives of America's abused and neglected children by strengthening their rights, illuminating systemic failures, and igniting reform to correct them. We pursue our mission through research, public engagement, policy advocacy, and litigation. [www.firststar.org](http://www.firststar.org)

**About The Children's Advocacy Institute**

The Children's Advocacy Institute, of the University of San Diego School of Law, works to improve the health, safety, and well being of children. In addition to its academic component, CAI engages in regulatory and legislative advocacy, impact litigation and public education in order to ensure that children's interests are represented effectively whenever and wherever government makes policy and budget decisions that will impact them. [www.caichildlaw.org](http://www.caichildlaw.org)

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