

Honoring "National Foster Care Month"

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Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues in recognizing May as ``National Foster Care Month". This occasion provides an opportunity to examine key issues affecting foster children. I am very pleased that Congress recently improved our child welfare laws greatly, extending coverage till the age of 21 and promoting kinship care. The Recovery Act also included additional funds for child welfare to support states in caring for vulnerable children during hard economic times.

As unemployment rates continue to rise, it is critical that we continue to invest in safety net programs that ensure our children are protected and are able to develop into healthy adults. Most children in the child welfare system are from low-income families. As policymakers, we must stand ready to provide the aid needed to help families so that child welfare supports are not needed. We must continue to promote all permanency options so that children do not remain in the foster care system longer than necessary. And, we must ensure to integrate the needs of foster care children in relevant policy areas. For example, there currently are federal protections for homeless youth to ensure that they have stability in their educational environments during elementary and high school. We should expand these protections to cover all foster children.

In the areas of health care reform, job training, and higher education, we must consider the needs of foster care children.

National Foster Care Month is a time for us to remember that it is crucial that we support foster care families and children by making a national investment in our children. Our children are entitled to stable, caring homes; if we deny them what they truly deserve, we can anticipate a colder, more uncertain future for our nation.