

U.S. House of Representatives

Statement of The Honorable William D. Delahunt of Massachusetts Regarding H.R. 622, Hope for Children Act of 2001

Thursday, May 17, 2001

Mr. Speaker, I am a supporter of the Hope for Children Act, and was among its original cosponsors. The bill will help make it possible for many more families to provide children with loving, permanent loving homes.

But I was greatly disappointed to hear that the bill we would be considering today is not the bill I cosponsored. It has been stripped of one of its most important provisions, which was designed to help those adoptive families most in need of our assistance: those who adopt children with special needs.

Children with special needs are those who, because of their age, race, disability, or other characteristics would be unlikely to find a permanent home without special assistance. Many are older, or have mental, physical or emotional problems. Not only are these children least likely to find a loving home. But when they do find a home, their adoptive parents typically face special financial burdens in caring for them.

One might think that the adoption tax credit would be structured so as to take account of this. In fact, to all appearances, the current credit does this, by providing \$6,000 rather than the usual \$5,000 to families who adopt special needs children.

But the credit actually does little for these families, because it can be applied only to such adoption-related expenses as adoption fees, court costs and attorneys fees. Most special needs children are adopted from foster care or publicly-supported institutions, and the families who adopt them do not incur these kinds of expenses. That's why the Treasury Department reported last October that only 15 percent of these families were able to claim any tax benefits under the credit for 1998.

The provision that was removed from the bill would have remedied this situation, by providing a \$10,000 tax credit for families who adopt a special needs child irrespective of the nature of the expenses they incur in providing for the child.

This would have ensured that *all* adoptive families could partake equally of the benefits of the credit. And most importantly, it would have provided a meaningful incentive to those who are eager to adopt children with special needs but may be unable to absorb all of the extraordinary financial burden this can entail.

As an adoptive father, I believe we have a strong interest as a nation in encouraging *all* adoptions. But especially those that provide a permanent home to a child with special needs. I will vote for the bill today, but I very much hope a way can be found to reinstate the provision before it is sent to the President.