

# U.S. Rep. Moore: Introduces the Suspend the Timeline Not Parental Rights During a Public Health Crisis Act

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*Today, Congresswoman Moore introduced H.R. 7976, legislation to pause the federal timeframe for states to file a petition to terminate parental rights for a child and guarantee that states do not receive federal funding cuts due to this change in policy. In response, she released the following statement:*

“COVID-19 has created great uncertainty for many, causing millions to face housing, health, food, and job insecurity. It has also hindered parents from being able to utilize the services now unavailable in the COVID closedown that would normally help them reunify with their children. This unprecedented crisis should not lead to permanent damage to families because of a federal timeline created before this pandemic.”

This bill already has bipartisan backing from numerous advocacy groups across the aisle, who note the importance of preserving children’s family ties:

“Parents who were diligently working services required to provide a safe, stable home for their children suddenly, and through no fault of their own, found themselves unable to access these services due to COVID-19 pandemic-related lockdowns,” said **Andrew C. Brown, Distinguished Senior Fellow of Child and Family Policy with the Texas Public Policy Foundation.** “But the clock continues to run on arbitrary case timelines governing termination of parental

rights, robbing them of precious time. A temporary suspension of termination timelines gives these parents a fair opportunity to restore their families and honors their decision to take personal responsibility by doing the hard work necessary to achieve reunification.”

“Children in foster care have a heightened need and clear right to visit their parents. At the start of the pandemic, many child welfare agencies suspended in-person family time for children and their parents and siblings. Before the pandemic, many of these children would have been returned to their families, but agencies have been unable to provide the services needed to facilitate reunification. We should not allow this pandemic to lead to unnecessary permanent termination of parent-child relationships,” **Jey Rajaraman, Chief Counsel, Family Representation Project, Legal Services of New Jersey.**

“We should not allow the unprecedented challenges of this public health situation to take away a family’s chance to reunite. Children deserve the right to be with their families whenever safely possible,” **Chris Gottlieb, Co-Director, NYU School of Law, Family Defense Clinic.**

*Rep. Gwen Moore has long been a leader on child welfare reform. She looks forward to working with her colleagues from both parties to ensure these families are given the opportunity they deserve to safely reunify. COVID has led to an immense amount of uncertainty in the lives of families struggling with poverty. This bill prevents a temporary, though severe, health crisis from causing irrevocable separation of children from their parents and a permanent loss of their vital family times who have lost the opportunities every family deserves.*

Read more information about the legislation [here](#).