

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 27, 1994

*file: Children's
Issues*

Nancy Ebb
Senior Staff Attorney
Children's Defense Fund
25 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Ms. Ebb:

Thank you for sending me CDF's most recent report on child support. My staff and I appreciate the opportunity to review the report and will certainly contact you if we have questions.

Sincerely,



Carol H. Rasco
Assistant to the President for
Domestic Policy

CHR:ram

THE WHITE HOUSE
OFFICE OF DOMESTIC POLICY

CAROL H. RASCO
Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy

To: _____

Draft response for POTUS
and forward to CHR by: _____

Draft response for CHR by: _____

Please reply directly to the writer
(copy to CHR) by: _____

Please advise by: _____

Let's discuss: _____

For your information: _____

Reply using form code: "Reports" _____

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Send copy to (original to CHR): _____

Schedule? Accept Pending Regret

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Remarks: _____

CDF's most recent
report on child support,

Pers. sig.

The letter isn't
attached—

JUN 23 REC'D



Children's Defense Fund

June 17, 1994

Carol Rasco
Assistant to the President for
Domestic Policy
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. Rasco:

I am sending you a copy of the Children's Defense Fund's latest report on child support at Marian Wright Edelman's request. This fifty-state study looks at the performance of state child support enforcement agencies in 1983 and 1992. Its results underscore the urgent need for reform of the child support system. We hope you will find it of interest.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Ebb". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy Ebb
Senior Staff Attorney

Enclosures

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Fax 202 662 3510

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE

Friday, June 17, 1994

CONTACT: Stella Ogata
202/662-3609



Children's Defense Fund

CHILDREN PAY WHEN PARENTS DON'T SAYS NEW CDF REPORT

Delinquent Parents and Child Support Enforcement System Failing Nation's Children

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Americans are more faithful about paying for their cars than for their children, according to a new report issued today by the Children's Defense Fund (CDF). The national delinquency rate for used car loans was less than three percent in 1992, while the delinquency rate for child support owed to mothers was an astounding 49 percent in 1990.

Enforcing Child Support: Are States Doing the Job? surveyed performance by state child support enforcement agencies which serve all welfare families as well as those non-welfare families who ask for help. The study found that after a decade of federal and state government efforts to improve child support enforcement, delinquent parents and overburdened states are failing to provide millions of children with the economic support they deserve.

CDF's report concludes that:

- Children were not substantially better off in 1992 than they were nearly a decade earlier. In 1983, at least some child support collection was made in 14.7 percent of the cases served by state child support agencies; by 1992, this rate edged up by only four percent to 18.7 percent of the cases.
- At the current rate of improvement, it will be more than 180 years before each child served by a state agency can be guaranteed even a partial support payment.
- States' non-welfare caseloads almost quadrupled, skyrocketing from 1.7 million in 1983 to almost 6.5 million in 1992. Although state and federal governments increased child support investments, the new resources barely kept pace with exploding caseloads. Overall, agencies more than doubled their caseloads from 1983 to 1992.

-more-

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- Some states have made remarkable improvements in child support enforcement. For example, Virginia and Washington State dramatically increased their rates of establishing paternity by pioneering hospital-based programs that encourage fathers voluntarily acknowledge paternity of children born out-of-wedlock.

"Our child support system is failing to deliver on its most basic promise to children -- that parents will be held responsible for ensuring that children have a roof over their heads and food on their tables," said CDF President Marian Wright Edelman. "Children pay when their parents don't."

The report cites a 1992 survey of 300 single parents that shows the real harm children suffer when child support is not paid. During the first year after the non-custodial parent left the home, more than half the families surveyed faced a serious housing crisis. Ten percent became homeless, while 48 percent moved in with friends or family to avoid homelessness. Nearly a third reported that their children went hungry at some point during that year. Over a third reported that their children lacked appropriate clothing, like a winter coat.

The report includes a "Hall of Fame" and "Hall of Shame" of states doing the best and worst jobs of enforcing child support. Hall of Fame states include Delaware, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Washington State and Wisconsin. States that did well tended to have more manageable caseloads per worker, and to spend more per case. CDF said that these states should be congratulated, but pointed out that even the best states have a long way to go: in Washington State, one of the nation's leaders, two out of three cases served by the state agency went without any support payment at all.

Hall of Shame states include Arizona, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Tennessee and Texas. States were included in the Hall of Shame if they ranked in the bottom ten states in the country in two or more key measures of child support performance (such as percentage of cases with paternity established or collections made).

"If steps are not taken now to improve child support enforcement, ten generations of children will be born, reach adulthood, and pass out of the system without any assurance that at least some child support will be collected for them in a year," said Nancy Ebb, CDF senior attorney and author of the report.

CDF's report recommends a long-range strategy of improving the child support enforcement system by making the federal government responsible for support collections, leaving establishment of paternity and the support obligation to the states. It also recommends adoption of a child support assurance system to guarantee children a minimum level of support when the government is unable to collect it on their behalf. More immediately, CDF urges the federal government to help states locate absent parents and collect support, as well as to ensure that each state has the staff and resources to do the job right and uses models that have proven successful in other states. A companion to the report, Child Support Reform: A State Checklist for Change, outlines successful state practices.

The Children's Defense Fund exists to provide a strong and effective voice for children who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. CDF is a private, nonprofit organization supported by foundations, grants, and individual donations.

ENFORCING CHILD SUPPORT:

ARE STATES DOING THE JOB?

By Nancy Ebb

June 1994

DEAR LORD
BE GOOD TO ME
THE SEAS ARE
WIDE AND SO
MY BOAT IS
SO SMALL



Children's Defense Fund

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