

GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
OFFICE

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

Governmental Affairs Office

740 Fifteenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005-1022
(202) 662-1760
FAX: (202) 662-1762

DIRECTOR
Robert D. Evans
(202) 662-1765
rdevans@staff.abanet.org

SENIOR LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL
Denise A. Cardman
(202) 662-1761
cardmand@staff.abanet.org

Kevin J. Driscoll
(202) 662-1766
driscollk@staff.abanet.org

Lillian B. Gaskin
(202) 662-1768
gaskinl@staff.abanet.org

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL
R. Larson Frisby
(202) 662-1098
frisbyr@staff.abanet.org

Kristi Gaines
(202) 662-1763
gainesk@staff.abanet.org

Kenneth J. Goldsmith
(202) 662-1789
goldsmithk@staff.abanet.org

Ellen McBarnette
(202) 662-1767
mcbarnee@staff.abanet.org

E. Bruce Nicholson
(202) 662-1769
nicholsonb@staff.abanet.org

DIRECTOR GRASSROOTS
OPERATIONS/LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL
Julie M. Strandlie
(202) 662-1764
strandlj@staff.abanet.org

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
LAW CONSULTANT
Hayden Gregory
(202) 662-1772
gregoryh@staff.abanet.org

STATE LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL
Rita C. Aguilar
(202) 662-1780
aguilarr@staff.abanet.org

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
Julie Pasatiempo
(202) 662-1776
jpasatiempo@staff.abanet.org

STAFF DIRECTOR FOR
INFORMATION SERVICES
Sharon Greene
(202) 662-1014
greenes@staff.abanet.org

EDITOR WASHINGTON LETTER
Rhonda J. McMillion
(202) 662-1017
mcmillionr@staff.abanet.org

May 20, 2004

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Bar Association, I am writing to urge your support for an amendment that Senator Edward Kennedy will introduce during the Judiciary Committee's mark-up of S. 1129, the Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act of 2004, introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein. We applaud Senator Feinstein for authoring this long-needed measure and Senator Kennedy for introducing this amendment to provide the crucial underpinnings to the architecture of protection that S. 1129 would create.

Senator Kennedy's amendment would give the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) the authority, when *pro bono* counsel is not available, to make grants to nonprofit agencies to provide legal representation. The Department of Justice now awards grants to nonprofit agencies to provide legal representation to battered immigrants. The Kennedy amendment would allow ORR to award similar grants to represent unaccompanied minors.

This modest measure will have a significant impact. It will help ensure that vulnerable children have adequate access to legal counsel, as well as create a more equitable and efficient system through the participation of counsel.

These vulnerable children include asylum seekers as well as children who have been smuggled into the country and who may be, or have been, forced into sweatshop labor or sexual servitude. While *pro bono* representation should be encouraged and utilized to the maximum extent possible, it cannot meet the need in all cases, particularly for the many children who are detained in remote border areas. The lack of legal representation is especially troubling given the life-altering decisions reached in many of these cases.

Vulnerable children need the benefits conveyed by both the Kennedy amendment and S. 1129. We urge your support for both.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Evans