

Washington, D.C. –Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore) joined Reps. Earl Pomeroy (D-ND), Gerry Weller (R-IL) and Dave Camp (R-MI) in introducing the Tribal Foster Care and Adoption Act of 2007, a bill that would provide Indian Tribes with the same direct access to federal funding for foster care and adoption services that states currently receive.

“We should be doing everything we can to provide access to foster care services for every child that needs it, and extending federal funding to tribal adoption is absolutely vital to helping the 10,000 American Indian and Alaska Native children who are in our nation’s system,” said Congressman Blumenauer. “This bill will allow tribes to provide their children with the care they, like all other American children, deserve.”

Currently 10,000 American Indian and Alaska Native children are in the nation’s foster care system, at a rate that is disproportionately higher than non-Indian children. Despite these numbers, the federal government’s largest source of support for children in the foster care system is not available to Indian children and the tribal governments that care for them.

The “Tribal Foster Care and Adoption Access Act of 2007” would correct the inequity in the Foster Care and Adoption Assistance Act by allowing tribes and tribal organizations to apply directly to the federal government to receive foster care and adoption assistance funding. Currently state governments can apply on an entitlement basis for reimbursements for services provided to income-eligible children who are placed in foster care or adoptive homes through state agencies. Services provided by tribes, however, are not eligible for reimbursement unless there is a tribal-state agreement.

This legislation has the strong support of the National Indian Child Welfare Association, the National Congress of American Indians, Association on American Indian Affairs, American Public Human Services Association, Child Welfare League of America, Children’s Defense Fund, and many others.