**A month to focus on fighting for foster kids all year**

Making sure that all children have a permanent and loving home is not a Democrat or Republican issue—it should be an American priority. And since May is “National Foster Care Month,” what better time to have a conversation about this critical issue.

At a time when Congress has a hard time agreeing on much, members of Congress from both political parties and across the country are coming together to participate in an annual event on Capitol Hill: Foster Youth Shadow Day. Nearly 60 foster youth and former foster youth get the chance to spend time shadowing a Member of Congress from their state. Not only do they have the chance to see the inner workings of Congress up close, they also have the chance to share their stories with those who can improve the lives of the more than 400,000 American youth who are part of our nation’s foster care system. These children are our children, and we have a responsibility to make sure they have the opportunity to grow up in a stable and supportive family.

Child development experts agree that having a permanent home and family is key for a child to grow into a healthy and productive adult. When a child grows up in an environment with an adult who is committed to their long-term well-being and on whom they can depend, the child is simply in a better position to thrive.

Unfortunately, too many foster children lack this basic and stable environment to begin their lives and enter the foster care system because of parental abuse, neglect or abandonment. Removing a child from their home can be devastating and confusing for a child of any age, but the more a foster care child is moved within the system, the greater the chance that the child will lose contact with siblings, other family members, and other friends and adults who have been important in their lives—including neighbors, coaches and religious leaders.

Members of Congress have the ability to make an enormous impact on the lives of children who are a part of the foster care system by focusing our budget, policy making and oversight roles on improving ways to keep children in stable homes.

**INSERT STORY ABOUT YOUR MEMBER’S WORK ON FOSTER CARE, AN ORGANIZATION IN YOUR DISTRICT OR A YOUNG PERSON OR PROFESSIONAL WITH WHOM YOU INTERACT.**

But this story is not unique. Across the United States, Democrats and Republicans are working together to find positive outcomes for every infant and child in foster care and to promote a successful transition to adulthood for older foster children who are becoming adults. Through reuniting foster children with their parents, finding loving parents to adopt them, and working with guardians who are committed to caring for foster youth, we are finding successful ways to bring foster youth into stable homes where they have better chances of thriving.

When it comes to developing policy recommendations to strengthen the child welfare system and improve the overall well-being of youth and families, our ties as parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles are stronger than our ties as a member of a political party.

Although we specifically recognize Foster Care Month during May, ensuring that all kids have a stable place to grow up is something that I am working on year round. We have made improvements for foster youth, but we still have much work to do to make sure these kids have the best possible life that they deserve.

Our future depends on it.