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## National Foster Care Month, 1988

*By the President of the United States of America*

### A Proclamation

The family is the indispensable foundation of society; at its best, it performs tasks that no other entity can hope to duplicate. The family has the primary responsibility for nurturing children, transmitting our culture, and building the character traits that make for healthy adults and good citizens. Upon the strength of the family rests the future of our Nation.

For a variety of reasons, however, some parents are unable to provide a minimally acceptable level of care for their children, and temporary or permanent alternative placement is necessary. National Foster Care Month presents an appropriate opportunity for all of us—public officials, business, religious, and community leaders, and parents alike—to reflect on the pressures facing families today and on the need for increased efforts to ensure that abandoned or abused children have the opportunity to live in healthy, loving homes.

The emphasis in foster care must be on the well-being of the child, and public policy must serve to promote alternative placement that represents actual care and not mere custody. Because the tasks facing foster parents often include special challenges, such as care of a child who is physically or mentally handicapped or who has been emotionally or physically abused, the mothers and fathers whom society qualifies to accept this added responsibility must be held to a high standard. To accomplish this goal, many more happy and successful families must be willing to step forward and to offer to share heart and home with children desperately longing for both. The aim of all foster care must be the establishment for the child of a sense of permanence and belonging.

National Foster Care Month also provides an opportunity to offer public thanks for the sacrifices and dedication of the many foster parents and concerned professionals working in the field of foster care. Their jobs require extraordinary patience and love, and their rewards are often reaped only years after their primary labor is done—when the child is grown and fully appreciates what has been done for him or her, or when society pauses from its hectic rush forward to recognize the good they have accomplished.

Finally, this month-long observance calls us to deeper thought on the role of values and ideas in the very formation of families. For if the goal of child care is the creation of a warm, stable environment, it is self-evident that the best place to start is in the pursuit of strong and stable marriages. If the need for foster care is not to outstrip our society's capacity for remedial action, it is critical to focus more efforts on policies that promote and protect the triad of mother, father, and child as the harmonious chord God intended for them to be.

To demonstrate our esteem and appreciation for those who devotedly and selflessly share their lives with foster children, the Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 59, has designated the month of May 1988 as "National Foster Care Month" and has requested the President to issue a proclamation in its observance.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the month of May 1988 as National Foster Care Month. I call upon all educators, churches, health care providers, the media, public and private organizations, and the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twelfth.

*Ronald Reagan*