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CHINA

Families with Children from China (FCC) Response to Changes in Eligibility for Adopting in China

We respectfully write to you as parents who have had the privilege of adopting children born in China. We express our appreciation for China's highly regarded adoption process, which has served to bring together thousands of successful families, including our own. Our families are also members of Families with Children from China (FCC), an international network of adoptive family support organizations. Adoptive families began forming FCC groups more than 12 years ago. Today, there are more than 100 chapters of Families with Children from China. These FCC groups – encompassing more than 7,000 families – serve as community resources, encourage Chinese cultural activities and work to bring the study of Chinese language into our children's schools.

The FCC community encompasses a variety of views on many topics, but is united in its belief that adoption is one of the best ways of forming a family. We encourage others to choose adoption and our families are ambassadors of both adoption and an appreciation of Chinese culture. We are also united in our sincere hope that the China adoption program will remain as inclusive as possible.

Our FCC community has become aware of the recently proposed changes to the eligibility requirements for prospective parents, which include age and health restrictions and provide that single individuals will no longer be eligible to adopt. We appreciate China's constant efforts to ensure that its children are placed with healthy parents in stable homes. We also appreciate and strongly support China's efforts to address the current backlog of dossiers at the China Center of Adoption Affairs (CCAA) and to

reduce the frustration arising from waiting times experienced by adopting parents. We offer the following views and suggestions for your consideration before the proposed changes are implemented on May 1, 2007.

Support from the China Adoption Community:

A bridge of deep appreciation now exists between the parents who have adopted children from China and Chinese government officials and welfare workers who made our adoptions possible. We recognize that our adoptions in China were a privilege and we feel gratitude - for our children and for our role as their parents. We encourage others to adopt from China because our experiences have been so positive. These feelings and the actions we have taken to honor our children's heritage and to express our gratitude create for us a very special and unbreakable link with China.

Together with our children, and as part of their education, we have learned much about the remarkable country where they were born. We celebrate China's holidays and work to learn its language and absorb its enduring culture. With increasing frequency, our families are returning to China and visiting their children's orphanages. Many of us have observed the fond welcome our children receive when they return as overseas Chinese. The children are proud of their heritage.

FCC member families – children and parents – are also pleased that they can make donations to support China's efforts to provide foster care and schooling for the children in the orphanages, to fund surgery for those who are disabled, and to support other programs to improve the children's lives. By working together to raise these donations, we also teach our children to be responsible global citizens who serve as models to their American friends.

FCC and other China adoptive families also promote the China program by making sure that media representations are accurate and fair. Since the early 1990s, there have been hundreds of news reports about adoptions from China which have generated very positive feelings between our two countries. If an article or broadcast has portrayed China's adoption program unfairly, American adoptive parents have been the first to step forward to correct the mistaken coverage.

The appreciation American adoptive families express to China leaves a strong and deep impression on other Americans. When others see the way that our families honor our children's Chinese heritage they learn more about China. All of this contributes to

increasing the visibility and position of the People's Republic of China, as well as enhancing awareness of her role in our global future.

China's Adoption Leadership and Proposed New Regulations:

We believe that the Chinese government runs the best international adoption program in the world, and sets the international standard for fairness, transparency, and efficiency. Adoptive parents all over the world also support and applaud China's efforts to increase domestic adoptions. As demonstrated by the longstanding success of the adoption program, our own personal experiences and China's accession to the Hague Convention on International Adoption, we recognize that China is dedicated to putting the interests of children first and to providing a highly consistent and predictable process for adopting parents. We have seen China make tremendous strides to increase the quality of care and living conditions at social welfare institutes across the country. China's regulations apply evenhandedly to domestic and international adoptions and this has resulted in an increased number of adoptions to the great benefit of the children in those institutions.

With respect to the proposed regulations, our FCC community understands that the new restrictions reflect China's goal of ensuring that children are placed only in stable homes with healthy parents able to care for them for many years to come. We also appreciate and strongly support China's efforts to reduce the backlog of dossiers and waiting times experienced by adopting parents. While our FCC community also recognizes the importance of these goals, it is our hope that they may be achieved without prohibiting so many prospective parents who would be deemed ineligible under the proposed new regulations. Because there are differences in the cultures of our two countries, some new restrictions are difficult for American parents to understand, such as certain medical conditions and disabilities, and the single parent limitation. We respectfully offer for your consideration this information about the impact that these proposed regulations will have on our China adoption community.

First, based on our experience, we believe that the new regulations will prevent many individuals who would be excellent parents from adopting. We note this with enormous sadness and loss. For example, under the proposed regulations, 70% or more of the members of the Boards of Directors of FCC-Northern California and FCC-New England would not be eligible to adopt today. We believe that these two boards of directors are reflective of other FCC boards. They are comprised of the people who take leadership positions to provide support for the children in their communities. These leaders bring children into language and culture programs and connect Chinese adoptees with each

other and with the larger Chinese American community. The new rules will significantly alter the profile of this highly supportive parent community.

Perhaps the largest potential group that will be excluded under the new regulations are single parent applicants. Within our FCC membership, single parents have shown exceptional devotion to their children. Many single mothers and fathers not only parent successfully, but have also served in leadership positions within FCC for many years, promoting Chinese culture and helping to raise funds to support Chinese orphanages. Moreover, their children teach us – by their example – that parenting is not so much about having two parents as it is about love and support, encouragement and dedication. Our single parents have shown that they have an abundance of these attributes. We have included several articles written about single parent families which illustrate how successfully these families are raising their children.

Second, there are many families who have had the privilege of adopting a child or children from China who wish to adopt another brother or sister, but would become ineligible under the new regulations. Those of us who have had the opportunity to adopt more than one child from China understand the deep relationship and positive family dynamic that comes from having a brother or sister who was also born in China and adopted. These are experienced families who typically are already highly involved and invested in the culture of China and in the Chinese community. It is our hope that the China adoption authorities will take this special situation into consideration and perhaps provide certain exceptions for qualified families who have previously adopted from China.

Third, we are concerned about the effect that the proposed exclusions may have on children whose parents would be ineligible if those parents applied under the proposed eligibility requirements. As one single mother said when talking about this proposed change, “My daughter has such a glowing view of China after our trip this summer. How can I tell her that the Chinese government no longer thinks that I would be a good parent? It’s just too confusing for her.” We ask the Chinese adoption authorities to consider how these proposed restrictions will affect not only our children, but the orphans who still wait to be adopted.

Lastly, we applaud and support China’s current rigorous standards for adoption and the requirements that are already in place requiring an extensive home study evaluation by a licensed, accredited social worker working with an approved agency. Those professionals take into consideration the physical and mental health, financial well-being

and stability of the family unit, putting the best interests of the child at the forefront. Single applicants and married couples who are not deemed qualified are not approved. We respectfully submit that the many checks already in place safeguard the future well-being of the child.

Conclusion

It is from our hearts that we write to you today. As devoted friends of China's adoption program, we agree that placing all eligible children in good homes through domestic or international adoption is the highest priority. Our FCC community offers any assistance or collaboration that would help to achieve this for the children. It is our sincere hope that in the future these new proposed restrictions might be eased to include the groups that may be eliminated as of May 1, 2007, and that the program may remain as inclusive as possible.

We believe adoption by international parents of children born in China has been a true example of mutual cooperation, bringing joy and pragmatic benefit to both parents in need of children and children in need of family. We look forward to the continuation of this deeply important and successful two-way relationship and we appreciate your willingness to consider the views of our community.

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Member families: 1,000
Children: 1560

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Children: 1000

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