Dear Senator _____

I am greatly concerned about the estimated 250,000 children who are exploited each day in government forces, government-supported armed groups, and rebel (or armed opposition) groups around the world. Called "child soldiers," they serve as combatants, porters, human mine detectors, and sex slaves. Their health and lives are endangered and their childhoods are sacrificed.

On April 19, 2007, Senators Durbin (D-IL) and Brownback (R-KS) introduced the Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2007 (S. 1175). This bill urges the United States to expand its efforts to help remove and rehabilitate children from armed forces and groups around the world. For example, it encourages the United States to increase funding to help rehabilitate former child soldiers and to work with the international community to bring to justice armed oppositional groups that have kidnapped children for use as soldiers.

As a means to press governments to end this practice, the bill also restricts U.S. military assistance to governments that are implicated in supporting the recruitment or use of children. According to U.S. government data, the United States provides military assistance to nine governments that recruit or use child soldiers or assist armed groups that do.

S. 1175 is an important step in preventing and ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers around the world. The bill provides important tools and incentives to help influence governments to demobilize and rehabilitate child soldiers, and seeks to ensure that U.S. taxpayer dollars are not used to finance the exploitation of children in armed conflict. I urge you to co-sponsor this bill.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

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