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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

March 2, 2000

Mr. Walter Benda
P.O. Box 583
Max Meadows, Virginia 24360

Dear Mr. Benda:

Thank you so much for appearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee yesterday. I was moved by your testimony, and I can only imagine how difficult it must be for you to be separated from your daughters.

I share your view that Elian Gonzalez should be reunited with his father, Juan Gonzalez. First, I think we should all be able to agree that parents and children belong together unless a parent is unfit. There has been no showing whatsoever that Juan Gonzalez is an unfit parent. Second, I think we must look very carefully at how our actions in this case affect the rights of the thousands of American parents involved in international custody disputes. I am deeply appreciative that you were able to share your persuasive views on this question with the Committee. My office has dealt with the issues surrounding international custody disputes on numerous occasions, and I know that we should do nothing that will make it even more difficult to assist parents in your position.

Once again, thank you for making the trip to Washington to express your views. Please accept my best wishes for your continuing efforts in your fight for your children and with the Children's Rights Council.

Sincerely,


PATRICK J. LEAHY
United States Senator

