



Dr. Cassie Statuto Bevan joined our board of directors in January 2016. She is a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, specializing in the study of child abuse and neglect. Dr. Bevan previously served Congress as a staff director on the Ways and Means Committee. There, she helped draft the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act of 1994 (amended 1996), the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, and other legislation across 20 years of public service.

Gabriel Network: *What are your greatest accomplishments?*

Cassie Statuto Bevan, EdD: I was involved in creating the Adoption and Safe Families Act, which expedites adoption for children out of foster care. I am also proud of the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act, which says that adoption placement agencies cannot discriminate against children or adoptive parents on the basis of their race.

GN: *With which famous person would you most want to sit down for dinner?*

Cassie: Mother Theresa. She blessed my children! Mother Theresa visited Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament to open a convent there. She walked past my children, placed her hands on their heads, and blessed them.

GN: *What is the state of child abuse and neglect in our society?*

Cassie: It's getting worse, especially for the most vulnerable children: those under 5 years of age. Many are born with opioids and methadone in their systems. When they leave the hospital, they go home to houses and parents ill-equipped to take care of them.

GN: *What can we do about it?*

Cassie: I think we should support young women by educating them about motherhood. Also, there is not enough encouragement of adoption. Not everyone is ready to be a parent. We must stop saying that adoption is "giving up your baby." You are not a bad parent if you choose adoption for your child. If you make an adoption plan, you are a very good mother. It means you are sacrificing for your child and you are making a life plan for your child. The biggest problem is that we treat adoption like it is a loss for both the mother and her child, when in fact it is a gain for both the mother and her child.

GN: *How can you tell whether someone is ready for parenthood?*

Cassie: There has to be an honest discussion about what it takes to raise a child, and you have to discuss each mother's motivations with her. Many mothers assume that having a baby fulfills their need to be loved, or that it solves other problems. But that is not realistic; that is not what happens. Instead, the mothers are fulfilling the babies' needs.

GN: *If you could be or do anything else, what would you choose?*

Cassie: I would like to serve as a judge in family court. A good judge focuses on the child.

GN: *Who had the greatest influence on you during your childhood?*

Cassie: My mother had the greatest influence. She volunteered at St. Vincent's hospital in New York, reading stories to the children there. She always wore a very broad skirt so that when she sat down to read stories with them, all the children could sit on it next to her.

GN: *As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?*

Cassie: A mother.