



## Special Citation from OCFS Commissioner Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden

**Whereas**, New York State prioritizes the well-being of our children and youth, and recognizes the importance of ensuring they have a loving, nurturing, and safe environment in which to grow and thrive when they cannot safely live with their parents or caregivers; and

**Whereas**, kinship care is an important option for children, and kinship caregivers are steadfast in their concern and commitment to providing children and youth with a stable and secure place to live, learn, and thrive; this type of care can also be provided by fictive kin – an individual who is not related by birth, adoption, or marriage to a child, but has an emotionally significant relationship with the child; and

**Whereas**, New York State commends all who have stepped forward to care for the children and young adults in their lives, often maintaining familial and cultural connections, preserving identity, reducing trauma, and providing greater stability for children who need to be placed out-of-home; and

**Whereas**, nearly 436,000 children in our state live in homes where a relative or fictive kin is the head of the household, and 122,000 children and youth are being raised by a relative or fictive kin with no parent present; and

**Whereas**, New York State is focused on a kin-first culture and supports strategies such as an identified Kinship Champion – a staff member within a local district or child welfare agency whose role is to increase safe and appropriate kinship placements in local departments of social services and authorized voluntary agencies; Kin-First Firewall – a practice that works to increase safe and appropriate kinship placements by requiring a higher level of review to determine if all viable relatives and adults with a positive relationship to the child have been explored; and the Kinship Navigator, which provides information and assistance via its website and toll-free telephone line to help locate, engage, and inform relatives and fictive kin of available options and provide support as they make crucial decisions regarding their ability to care for children and youth; and

**Whereas**, for State Fiscal Year 2024-2025, New York State has allocated over \$10.5 million to 21 regional Permanency Resource Centers that support and strengthen kinship, post-adoption, and post-guardianship families, so as to avoid foster care or other out-of-home placements, and to provide statewide services for kinship families and children in their care; and

**Whereas**, New York State also recognizes that partnerships among the education, legal, social and human services, mental health, and criminal justice communities are important and necessary for increasing accessibility to resources that enable children and youth in kinship care to flourish in all aspects of life; and

**Whereas**, Kinship Care Month provides an opportunity to highlight the unconditional love and commitment of countless kin and fictive kin throughout our state and nation; all New Yorkers are grateful for the many kinship caregivers who provide children and youth with a safe and secure environment that offers a foundation of love and support, and the sense of belonging that comes with being part of a family

**Now, Therefore**, I, Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden, Commissioner of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, do hereby proclaim September 2024 as

## Kinship Care Month

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Da Mia Harris-Madden".

**Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden, Commissioner**  
New York State Office of Children and Family Services  
September 2024