

Urge the Children's Bureau to Support Recognition of September as National Kinship Care Month June 9, 2021

Since 2008, the Children's Bureau has been the leader in kinship care services for non-foster kinship families. Beginning with the 2008 Fostering Connections kinship navigator demonstration projects, then with kinship navigator funding in the 2018 Families First Prevention Services Act and the 2018,19,20, 21 Omnibus Appropriations acts. And Just this month, the aging community has successfully advocated for the American Rescue Plan Act to provide funding for a Technical Assistance Center on Grandfamilies and Kinship Families. At the federal and state levels, as well as in local communities, kinship care has grown in importance.

Approximately, 2.7 million children live with kin, with about 140,000 in kinship foster care. The U. S. Senate and House have recognized this community and its contribution to the well-being of children in resolutions acknowledging September as Kinship Care Month. Since 2016, the Child Welfare League of America has joined in advocacy to Congress to pass resolutions. Congress has passed U. S. Senate resolutions in 2017 (Res. 264), 2019 (Res. 323), 2020 (Res. 736) and House resolution in 2019 (Res.542). In other years since 2016, Senate and House resolutions did not get votes due to the September rush of legislative business. Senate Wyden and Congresswoman Bass are the chief sponsors of the resolutions.

More than a dozen states have passed resolutions or gubernatorial proclamations: Nevada, Connecticut, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Illinois, California, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, South Dakota, and Texas.

The advocacy for Kinship Care Month has been grassroots, led originally in 2012 by the National Committee of Grandparents for Children's Rights and the NYS Kinship Navigator, which produced a guide on how to advocate for the month. Since 2016, Gerard Wallace, now retired director of the NYS Kinship Navigator, has provided draft resolutions to Senator Wyden and Congresswoman Bass.

Many states hold events in September to acknowledge their kinship communities. The Children's Bureau has also hosted luncheons during September. Bringing attention to the invaluable work of kinship caregivers has helped states and federal policy makers to understand and devise supports for kinship families.

Attached is the last Senate resolution. It presents compelling reasons to elevate the role of kinship care as a national child welfare resource. The hope is that the Children's Bureau will continue to promote the importance of kinship families by celebrating Kinship Care Month and will also contribute to the advocacy for resolutions this year in both Congress and the White House.

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