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Because we're stronger together

June 13, 2016

Generations United's Statement Supporting the Family First Prevention Services Act

Generations United commends House and Senate leaders on the proposed bipartisan, bicameral [Family First Prevention Services Act](#). This groundbreaking legislation takes the bold step to redirect federal funding to support evidence-based, upfront prevention services, making them available to the approximately 2.5 million children whose grandparents or other relatives step in to care for them, keeping them out of foster care and with family.

Children raised by relatives experience increased stability, and greater safety and permanency and better behavioral and mental health outcomes than children living with non-relatives. Yet, grandparents or other relatives often take on the care of children with little or no warning. These relatives face unique challenges finding information about resources, policies and services to help them navigate their new role providing full time care for children.

Supports offered through the [Family First Prevention Services Act](#) such as individual and family therapy, home visiting and kinship navigator programs can offer relatives the support they need to keep children out of foster care and help them thrive.

The proposed legislation will benefit children in grandfamilies by:

- Providing a partial federal match to states offering evidence-based Kinship Navigator programs.
- Allowing states to use federal funds to support 12 months of prevention services to keep children from needing to enter foster care, including families where a relative is caring for a child.
- Addressing barriers to licensure for relatives through the promotion of model family foster care licensing standards with a focus on ensuring states promote placements with family members.
- Reducing the amount of time foster children wait to be adopted or placed with relatives across state lines by encouraging states to replace their outdated child placement systems with a more efficient electronic system.
- Ensuring more foster children are placed with families by ending federal reimbursement when states inappropriately place children in non-family settings.
- Promoting permanency for children by extending adoption and legal guardianship incentive payments.

The proposed bill also reauthorizes the Regional Partnership Grant Program, which provides funding to state and local evidence-based services aimed at preventing child abuse and child neglect due to parental substance abuse, and it extends existing child welfare services for five years through the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program.

This trailblazing child welfare legislation stops short of providing important short-term financial assistance to relatives, as included in previous proposals. Relative caregivers are often retired, living on fixed incomes and unprepared to take on the expense of children who come into their care with no chance to plan in advance. [Research shows](#) that caregivers in grandfamilies are experienced and savvy financial managers who forgo their own financial needs and dreams to care for children. They often simply lack the needed resources. Generations United looks forward to working with Members of Congress who are championing federal and state solutions to address these ongoing financial challenges.

For a summary of the bill, [click here](#).

For draft bill text, [click here](#).