

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

The Informing Grandfamilies Act of 2024

U.S. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and Todd Young (R-IN)

Why do we need the Informing Grandfamilies Act?

An estimated **2.7 million children** in the United States are being raised by grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends – about 18 times more than those placed in foster care. These families, often referred to as grandfamilies and kinship families, have unique needs and must navigate complex systems of support. While experts believe the number of grandfamilies and kinship families has increased due to the opioid crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, there is a long history of grandparents and other relatives stepping in to care for children when their parents are unable.

Taking on a kinship caregiving role can come unexpectedly and with little help. Grandparents and other relatives often face challenges affording the costs of raising a child and may postpone retirement, downsize a home, or deprioritize their own medical needs in order to pay for their new caregiving expenses. Many relative caregivers are eligible for federal and state assistance, like cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, to help make ends meet. However, many are unaware of other government programs that are available to help with basic needs. Others may not be accessing all of the available benefits through their state.

What will the Informing Grandfamilies Act do?

The Informing Grandfamilies Act would require states to use their existing channel of communication to provide grandfamilies with information about other available resources. It would also require states to hire a resource employee or contract with a community-based organization that has the necessary expertise to provide guidance to grandfamilies and kinship families. Specifically, the bill would require states to inform grandfamilies of:

- Potential options for the family to become formal foster parents or legal guardians to the child and to receive support on the child's behalf, including the financial ramifications of each option;
- The availability of guardianship assistance payments and supports, if offered by the state; and
- Contact information for the state's Kinship Navigator Program or other state agencies and community-based organizations that can guide the family towards other support programs and resources, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), legal services, and Medicaid.

Endorsing Organizations: DC KinCare Alliance, Generations United, National Council on Aging