

June 26, 2017

The Honorable Susan Collins  
United States Senate  
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington DC, 20150

The Honorable Robert Casey  
United State Senate  
393 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Collins and Senator Casey:

Thank you for your bipartisan work to raise visibility and provide support to families across the country where grandparents or other relatives are raising children. We, the undersigned, write in strong support of the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act (S.1091).

More than 2.5 million grandparents across the U.S. report they are responsible for raising their grandchildren. More than 7 million children are being raised in “grandfamilies,” households headed by kin- a grandparent, great-grandparent, uncle, aunt or other relative who is not their birth parent. These grandparents and other relatives step in to provide safe and stable homes to children who cannot remain with their parents. The number of these families has recently increased, a phenomenon attributed to the opioid crisis.

When children cannot remain with their parents, research shows living with grandparents or other relatives reduces trauma, increases stability, reinforces safety and well-being, helps keep brothers and sisters together, and honors family and cultural ties. Yet, the grandparents and other relatives who step into this role face great challenges and do so at great personal sacrifice. Unlike parents or foster parents who plan for months or years to care for a child, grandparents and other relatives often step in to raise the children unexpectedly with little to no support. Suddenly they are forced to navigate complex systems to help meet the physical and cognitive health needs of children who come into their care, often after experiencing significant trauma. Taking on the unexpected expense of a child can be especially devastating to caregivers living on fixed incomes. Countless grandparents report spending down their retirement savings to address the health, mental health, food and clothing needs of the children, or to pay legal expenses from seeking legal custody of the children.

The Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act would help these families by providing a one-stop public source of federal information on resources and best practices to help these grandparents and other relatives meet the diverse needs of the children in their care as well as maintain their own physical and mental health and emotional well-being. Furthermore, by creating a federal task force to issue a report to Congress on best practices, resources, and gaps in services, the legislation takes critical steps toward improving the availability and quality of services to help grandfamilies across the country.

Thank you again for your leadership on this critical legislation. We look forward to partnering with you on this effort as well as exploring future opportunities to provide broader support for children and caregivers in these families.

Sincerely,

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine  
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
Arizona Grandparent Ambassadors  
Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance  
Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw - Grandparents as Parents Program  
Child Care Aware of America  
Child Welfare League of America  
Children's Defense Fund  
Families and Children Together  
Family Focused Treatment Association  
Family Service Society of Yonkers  
Fort Greene Strategic Neighborhood Action Partnership  
Foster Kinship  
FosterClub  
Generations United  
Grand Family Coalition, Inc.  
GrandFamilies of America  
Helping and Lending Outreach Support  
iFoster  
Jewish Federations of North America  
Lutheran Services in America  
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association of Counties  
National Center on Adoption & Permanency  
National Council on Aging  
National Foster Parent Association  
National Indian Child Welfare Association  
National Kinship Alliance for Children  
New York State Kinship Navigator  
North American Council on Adoptable Children  
Partners for Our Children  
Project GRANDD  
Voice for Adoption  
WordGatherers Publishing LLC  
Wyoming Kinship Advocacy  
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