

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 22, 2015

Dear Colleague:

In this country, an estimated 2.7 million children, one out of every eleven, live with kinship caregivers – grandparents or other relatives who serve as a guardian when children’s birth parents are unwilling or unable to care for them. In many cases, kinship care comes in the form of an informal, private arrangement between the parents and relative caregivers; other times, the child welfare system is more formally involved and the relative caregiver receives support services.

When children cannot remain with their birth parents, research shows that children placed with relatives or kin experience greater stability than children placed with non-relative foster families and that providing supportive services to relatives and kin can reduce the number of children entering or re-entering foster care. In turn, supporting kin has been shown to save money to the federal foster care system. Recognizing the positive outcomes associated with kinship care, Congress has acted over the years to extend supportive services to these caregivers. In 1996, Congress passed legislation ensuring a child’s extended family is notified and given placement priority whenever a child enters foster care. Recognizing that often times, potential relative caregivers are on a fixed income and not planning to take in a child, in 2008 Congress passed the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act* which allows kinship caregivers to receive a federal foster care subsidy. In 2014, Congress passed the *Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act* which modernized the Adoption Incentives program to reward states for increasing kinship placements as well as adoptions.

These changes have greatly improved the lives of millions of kinship families, but certainly more can be done to increase awareness of kinship care and support relative caregivers as they raise children. Please join Senators Wyden and Hatch in recognizing the valuable contribution of kinship caregivers both to the individual children whose lives they touch and to society at large.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Orrin Hatch
U.S. Senator