



Representing 122,000  
Seniors, age 60 and over,  
in Johnson County.

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#### % Area Agency on Aging

11811 South Sunset Drive  
Suite 1300  
Olathe, KS 66061-7056

913-715-8860/ Phone  
913-715-8825/ Fax

March 13, 2018

House Committee on Federal and State Affairs  
Attention: The Honorable John Barker, Chairperson  
Statehouse, Room 285-N  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Representative Barker and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB 2754

Thank you for carefully considering this testimony in support of HB 2754 to implement a Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) in Kansas.

HB 2754 fills a "gap" in needs for children and seniors by extending Title IV-E funds to relative guardians (and not only adoptive parents or foster parents).

HB 2754 complements the current foster care and adoptive care programs in Kansas and, moreover, the federal government pays the lion's share of the program cost, ranging from 50-83%.

Thirty-three states have implemented a GAP program since 2008, including all states surrounding Kansas, because states with such programs have shown cost savings to the state by reducing foster care expenses through support of kinship guardianship assistance programs. In other words, the state's cost of providing guardianship assistance programs is less than the state's cost of foster care maintenance programs. Such guardianship assistance programs are also in-line with Kansas' public policy of family taking care of family.

By way of background, in 2008, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (the "2008 Act") was **unanimously** passed in Congress allowing states the option of extending the use of Title IV-E funds to relative guardians (in addition to adoptive parents and foster parents). Public Law (P.L.) 110-351. Title IV-E of the Social Security Act provides federal matching funds to help states pay for foster care placements and now for guardianship assistance programs (GAP) with the federal government paying the lion's share (50-83%). Any sound fiscal note analysis must consider the federal matching fund payment, and, under Title IV-E, the relative guardian must be licensed.

The 2010 Census Bureau confirms that 7-10% of children in America today are being raised by grandparents or other relatives, and the same is true in Kansas.

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At a meeting with DCF in September 2017, we were told that approximately 75% of the 7,000 children in foster care today are Title IV-E eligible. **We were also told that a GAP program in Kansas would likely save the State at least \$250,000 in the first year. We are confident that estimate is low.**

At the Child Welfare Task Force meeting in October 2017, the Chief Clinical Officer for Saint Francis Community Services testified that children with a relative caregiver reach permanency more quickly and that the foster care system cannot provide all the required child welfare needs. A GAP program would complement the existing foster care system and does not compete with those programs.

The “federal financial participation” (FFP) share ranges from 50-83% of the GAP payments. States are reimbursed at 50% match for the cost of administering the Title IV-E program (such as salaries of caseworkers and administrators, office space, etc.) and 75% of the training costs associated with the program. Information systems are reimbursed at a 50% matching rate.

Extending Title IV-E funding of the Social Security Act for guardianship assistance programs would, in fact, support the well-being of the State’s two most vulnerable populations – seniors and children in need. With an overall cost saving to the State, it’s a win-win-win.

We appreciate your support of HB 2754 to implement a Guardianship Assistance Program in Kansas, and we would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,  
Johnson County Commission On Aging



Chuck Nigro  
Chair



Karen Weber  
GAP Chair