

Senator Hardy and committee,

My name is Kimberly Dykes (59) and I am writing in reference to the proposed bill concerning grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. I feel that passing this would be so helpful to those of us in this position.

In 2016 three of our grandsons, then 22 months, 2yr 9 months, and 5 came to live with us "temporarily". Their mom had made some poor decisions concerning drugs and other things and had left town. Dad (our son) was unemployed, homeless and had no where for the children. There had been concerns over the childrens welfare over the past year and we felt agreeing to have them live with us for this temporary time was best for them.

However, the parents went on their way, leaving us with no way to get medical care, daycare, preschool or anything as we "aren't the parents." We couldn't get the parents to sign releases and they would not show up to do any of the needed things for the children. They did not provide any financial assistance for their children. My husband Brent and I both work but our income is not suited for a family of five. I couldn't afford to quit work but also was not permitted to seek daycare and so my 80 year old mother agreed to help, again temporarily.

Months in with still no help from the children's parents and with them visiting less and less, the drugs, the unemployment, the homelessness continuing, we went to court for guardianship and it was granted in 2017. This gave us the ability to do all the things we needed but still not the income.

We had no idea where to turn for any kind of help. We supply the needs of a family of five and also try to give the children a few opportunities to be involved in some things like, for example, swimming lessons. Only when I approached the headstart program here in Salina to see if we could qualify for their services, were we able to track down ways to get some assistance and also were able to get daycare and preschool. This has been a huge blessing to us. However, had I not went there and started asking questions I would not have known what else to do. Also, we are grateful for the little bit of assistance we now receive, which helps with the monthly grocery bill. Our grandchildren are quite young and I know that not everyone in this situation qualify.

It should also be noted that our goal was and still is for the kiddos to return to a home with their parents and as such we set goals just as the foster care system would. But here we are, Feb. 2019 with no effort by the parents to achieve said goals, still unemployed, still homeless, and both of them recently jailed for drugs and other charges. It appears these wonderful little boys will be here for a time.

Thank you for your time in considering this bill.

Respectfully,
Kimberly Dykes