

SUPPORT SB 3308

KINSHIP IN DEMAND (“KIND”) ACT

SPONSORS: Gillespie, Cervantes, Hunter, Collins, Edly-Allen, Halpin

The **Kinship in Demand (“KIND”) Act** reinforces the Department of Children and Family Services’ (DCFS’) obligation to deliver services using a kin-first approach (prioritizing placing youth with relatives) and directs the juvenile courts to provide necessary oversight of the Department’s obligations to maintain and strengthen the connections of youth in care with their families.

Why does this bill matter?

Placing youth with relatives lessens trauma of family separation, reduces the number of times a child is moved, enhances permanency options if youth cannot be reunified, results in higher placement satisfaction for youth in care, and delivers better social, behavioral, mental health, and educational outcomes for youth than when they are placed in non-kin foster care.

**MORE THAN
10,000**
YOUTH IN DCFS CARE
LIVE WITH RELATIVES



OVER 60% OF THESE
CAREGIVERS
ARE UNNECESSARILY DENIED THE
FOSTER CARE BENEFITS NECESSARY
TO CARE FOR AND NURTURE A YOUNG PERSON.

These caregivers are denied these resources because current Illinois law requires relatives to meet complex standards designed decades ago for foster care. New federal rules – and the provisions of the KIND Act – will allow DCFS to apply commonsense standards to certify relatives to care for youth.

What this bill does:

✓ Improves Supports for Relatives Caring for DCFS-Involved Youth

The KIND Act provides equitable supports for kinship care and guardianship benefits to improve outcomes for DCFS-involved youth in relative care, as well as increase the capacity of relatives to become caregivers delivering permanency for more youth.

- Amends the Children and Family Services Act to: require DCFS to pursue federal funding opportunities to establish a kinship navigator program to assist relative caregivers involved with DCFS; strengthen DCFS’ obligations to engage in family finding efforts to promote a youth’s relational permanence; and, improves services and financial supports to assist relatives in becoming caregivers and subsidized guardians, including assistance with reasonable expenditures needed to prepare relative homes to meet the standards for a “certified relative caregiver home” and providing post-placement supports to kinship guardians to promote youth stability in relative placements similar to supports provided to adoptive families.
- Amends the Child Care Act and the Children and Family Services Act to remove barriers to equitable financial supports for kinship caregivers by statutorily defining standards for a “certified relative caregiver home” that are no more restrictive than the best practice recommendations developed by national child welfare groups to guide implementation of the new federal regulations. These changes will allow Illinois to maximize access to federal matching funds to provide many more relative caregivers with enhanced supports and also making more relatives eligible for subsidized guardianship for timely permanency.
- Amends the Juvenile Court Act to treat the permanency goal of guardianship in a manner more closely aligned with legal requirements for the least restrictive, most family-like option available as an alternative to achieve permanency when reunification is not viable. This much needed change will improve DCFS’ ability to comply with the BH consent decree.

✓ Enhances Court Oversight and System Accountability

- Amends the Juvenile Court Act to provide enhanced court oversight for family-finding efforts designed to ensure youth have long-term connections with their relatives and promote the voices of youth and their family members in permanency planning.
- Increases transparency by requiring DCFS to release public data regarding relative care and provide relatives with a process to appeal DCFS’ decisions as well as requiring the Auditor General to evaluate DCFS’ progress implementing the requirements of the KIND Act.

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SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS:

ACLU Illinois

