

Legislation Text

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Commending the Pennsylvania House of Representatives on the passage of a legislative package aimed at helping grandparents raising grandchildren and encouraging the Senate to pass this legislation into law.

WHEREAS, Currently in Pennsylvania, approximately 82,000 grandparents are the sole caregivers for roughly 89,000 grandchildren. This is a growing family dynamic, significantly exacerbated by the opioid abuse epidemic that continues to plague Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, The challenge is that many of the grandparents who are raising their grandchildren are reluctant to enter the formal child welfare system and therefore cannot qualify for assistance that is available through the foster care, adoption, or kinship care systems in Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, These grandparents are stepping up to do the right thing by their families, but often prefer to keep things “in the family” and not rely on state assistance. Or, many times, these grandparents are not aware of the assistance that may be available to them and their grandchildren, even if they elect not to enter the formal child welfare system; and

WHEREAS, Research has shown that children achieve higher levels of success when they're able to stay in a stable household situation with close family members. In addition to that, grandparents keeping their grandchildren out of the foster care system saves the state over an estimated \$1 billion per year; and

WHEREAS, State Representative Katharine M. Watson (R-Bucks) introduced House Bill 2133, establishing a Kinship Caregiver Navigator Program within the Department of Human Services as a resource for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren, but who are not involved with the formal child welfare system; and

WHEREAS, Under the Kinship Caregiver Navigator Program, individuals will be hired and trained as Kinship Caregiver Navigators, who will become knowledgeable and can assist grandparents by providing information and support about federal and state programs, financial aid, legal aid, respite services for caregivers, and education and support services for children. These Navigators also will be able to facilitate contact between the caregivers and relevant state, federal, and local agencies; and

WHEREAS, Grandparents or other family members who may be raising children can speak with a Navigator by calling a toll-free telephone number. The program also will establish a web site that provides the same relevant information and resources for kinship caregivers; and

WHEREAS, State Representative Eddie Day Pashinski (D-Luzerne) introduced House Bills 1539 and 390. HB1539 grants temporary guardianship to grandparents when the parents of the grandchildren are unable to care for them primarily due to substance abuse issues. The temporary guardianship would give grandparents the right to make vital basic decisions for their grandchildren, such as the ability to take a child to the doctor or enroll the child in school; and

WHEREAS, HB390 directs the Joint State Government Commission to study the trend of grandfamilies in

Pennsylvania and report its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, This bipartisan legislative package passed the House on April 17, 2018, and now moves to the Senate; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby commends the Pennsylvania House of Representatives on the passage of a legislative package aimed at helping grandparents raising grandchildren and encourages the Senate to pass this legislation into law.