

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

Kinship Guardianship Assistance

The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA) strongly urges your support for the proposed Kinship Guardianship Assistance program included in the Governor's Article VII legislation.

The proposed legislation offers foster care children, especially older youth who cannot return home and have not been able to find an adoptive family, an additional opportunity to find a permanent home. In addition, kinship guardianship assistance provides much needed financial support to help defray expenses. This financial assistance is especially important to those relatives who are retired, living on fixed incomes or caring for their own children and is necessary for families to move out of foster care and into more permanent arrangements.

Kinship guardianship is rooted in the best interests of children in foster care. Kin placements are likely to lead to better outcomes for these youth because they are more stable; children experience less disruption and trauma; and sibling relationships are more likely to be maintained. The option is also more culturally sensitive for minority families and will reduce the disproportionality and disparities that exist in child welfare.

In addition, kinship guardianship assistance also reduces the administrative burden on the child welfare system and will lead to caseload reductions. The financial savings for local departments of social services can be significant, between \$4,000 and \$12,000 per child in administrative overhead.

Under the Governor's proposed program, local departments of social services retain the same authority to make decisions regarding kinship guardianship arrangements as they have with reunification and adoption. Family Courts will review guardianship petitions and hold hearings in situations where all parties do not consent to the guardianship. Families will have access to an appeals process. Please note that in all cases, both a return to the parental home and adoption must be ruled out as options before kinship guardianship assistance is considered.

New York has an opportunity to provide an alternative path to permanency for youth. This option leads to improved outcomes for children, respects family relationships, saves the state and local districts money, and reduces child welfare workloads.

SCAA fully supports the Governor's proposed Article VII legislation to create a kinship guardianship assistance program in New York State and strongly urges your support for this important legislation.

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President/CEO

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