

Protect California's Foster Children
Sign a Bipartisan Delegation Letter to HHS Requesting Withdrawal of Harmful
Program Instructions

Dear California Colleague:

One of the best ways to achieve permanency for foster children is by placing these often abused and neglected children with a family member, rather than in a group home. Children in these settings have a stable family structure and a steady home. Since 2000, California has run the successful Kinship Guardian Assistance Payment (Kin-GAP) program, which places foster children with relatives and assists those relatives with meeting the child's needs. Currently, there are approximately 16,000 children in the state-funded Kin-GAP program.

Last year, Congress unanimously passed the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (P.L. 110-351). A major component of this legislation is a new program that would provide federal assistance to states that have implemented subsidized guardianship programs for foster children. Unfortunately, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has issued Program Instructions that restrictively interpret the legislation. Under this interpretation, none of the existing Kin-GAP children in California would be eligible for assistance. This would cost the state \$70 million a year. In order to qualify under the current ACF guidance, California will have to remove 16,000 children from their placements in the homes of family members and put them back into foster care for six months so that they qualify as a "new" case. This outcome is contrary to Congress' intent when it passed the Fostering Connections Act. ACF should rescind their program guidance and implement the law in a child and family friendly way.

The State of California, these foster children and the family members who stepped in to care for them should not be punished for having done the right thing. ACF's interpretation of the law penalizes not only the states that have done the right thing, but more importantly the children who are in safe and stable homes. Please join a bipartisan delegation letter to Secretary Sebelius and Assistant Secretary Nazario requesting withdrawal of the Program Instructions.

If you have any questions or would like to sign onto this letter, please contact Jeff Hild with Representative Stark at 5-5065 (Jeff.Hild@mail.house.gov) or Chris Marklund at 5-1986 (Chris.Marklund@mail.house.gov)

Sincerely,

Pete Stark

Ken Calvert

