



SR0812

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1 SENATE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The Kinship in Demand (KIND) Act, Public Act
3 103-1061, was signed into law on February 5, 2025 with all
4 provisions going into effect on July 1, 2025; and

5 WHEREAS, The KIND Act requires the Illinois Department of
6 Children and Family Services (DCFS) to adopt a kin-first
7 approach to the child welfare system, including, but not
8 limited to, improving access to guardianship as a permanency
9 goal for children in the DCFS's care, identifying and engaging
10 relatives throughout the duration of a case for extended
11 support and placement resources, and strengthening the level
12 and quality of support provided to relative caregivers to make
13 relative placements available to more children; and

14 WHEREAS, The KIND Act was created and passed to ensure
15 better outcomes for children, maintaining and strengthening
16 family connections and cultural ties through relative
17 placement and support opportunities; pursuant to this law,
18 DCFS must make continual efforts to identify and engage with
19 family members who could serve as caregivers or sources of
20 support in a child's life, and the courts must provide
21 oversight of DCFS's obligations; and

22 WHEREAS, Multiple studies have shown that sustained family

1 connection provides a level of relational permanence that
2 cannot be replaced, presenting a myriad of benefits for
3 children, which include, but are not limited to, reduced
4 trauma, improved mental health outcomes, fewer behavioral
5 problems, better social outcomes and educational stability,
6 greater placement stability, higher levels of permanency,
7 stronger ties to the child's family of origin, greater
8 placement satisfaction for children, including feelings of
9 love and belonging, and enhanced connections to cultural,
10 ethnic, racial, and traditional communities of origin; and

11 WHEREAS, Research findings from the Annie E. Casey
12 Foundation, among other organizations, have continually shown
13 that kinship care results in better outcomes for children; the
14 United States Congress has prioritized kinship care for
15 decades, enacting various laws to provide funding and national
16 standards to support a relative-focused foster care system
17 nationwide; and

18 WHEREAS, The role of family members in a child's life
19 extends beyond placement; relatives can contribute in other
20 meaningful ways, such as providing assistance with visitation,
21 transportation, and respite care, or simply as positive role
22 models with whom a child interacts regularly, providing
23 multiple points of connection and support; and

1 WHEREAS, Initial family-finding efforts and consistent
2 relative engagement throughout the duration of a child's case
3 are crucial to securing meaningful family support and
4 connections, requiring DCFS to be both a partner and resource
5 to families throughout the process; and

6 WHEREAS, Accordingly, one goal of the KIND Act is to
7 increase the number of children achieving permanency through
8 subsidized guardianship, to decrease the length of stays in
9 care, and to provide overall stability and sustained family
10 structure; guardianship has consistently proven to be the best
11 option for many families because it respects family
12 relationships when reunification is not available, and the
13 KIND Act has provided resources and requirements to make
14 kinship care and guardianship more viable options for
15 relatives; and

16 WHEREAS, Judges are gatekeepers of parents' and children's
17 rights to family integrity; judges make inquiries, enter
18 findings, and provide essential oversight to ensure DCFS meets
19 its obligations to children and families under the KIND Act,
20 including to continuously and meaningfully engage children's
21 extended network of kin, thereby securing relational
22 permanence for children regardless of where they are placed;
23 and

1 WHEREAS, The KIND Act supports the ongoing reforms
2 required by the B.H. v. Mueller consent decree to improve the
3 safety of thousands of children in DCFS's care, to lessen the
4 length of time taken for a child to achieve permanency, and to
5 improve the well-being of children in care and the quality of
6 service provided by DCFS; and

7 WHEREAS, DCFS staggered implementation of the KIND Act
8 with the first provisions taking effect on February 6, 2025,
9 which remove barriers to guardianship by providing additional
10 resources and supporting and prioritizing family finding,
11 relative engagement, and placement through enhanced caseworker
12 requirements, recognizing that federal law requires states to
13 engage and prioritize relative placements; and

14 WHEREAS, The KIND Act requires DCFS to establish rules and
15 procedures to ensure effective implementation, including rules
16 to ensure fair review of decisions when relatives are denied
17 placement, certification, or visitation; furthermore, under
18 Illinois law, relative placement cannot be denied unless it is
19 contrary to the child's best interest, adhering to the
20 principles set forth in the KIND Act; and

21 WHEREAS, On June 17, 2025, the Joint Committee on
22 Administrative Rules convened, provided approval for DCFS to
23 publish rules necessary for implementation, and recommended

1 that DCFS plan to revise these rules approximately one year
2 after effectuated to respond to needs identified during the
3 first year of implementation; DCFS published its rules,
4 effective July 7, 2025; and

5 WHEREAS, On August 4, 2025, Illinois State Representative
6 and President of the National Conference of State Legislatures
7 (NCSL) Marcus C. Evans Jr. presented at the annual NCSL
8 Legislative Summit as part of a panel to discuss how
9 legislators across the nation can bolster relative engagement
10 and improve outcomes for children involved with the foster
11 care system by embracing a kin-first approach as described in
12 the KIND Act; and

13 WHEREAS, On December 4, 2025, DCFS celebrated its official
14 launch of relative caregiver certification in Illinois with a
15 virtual town hall attended by nearly 5,000 child welfare
16 professionals; this launch included training, which detailed
17 the processes for caseworkers and DCFS staff; DCFS also
18 released Procedures 415 to guide case workers through the
19 certification process, among other administrative
20 requirements; and

21 WHEREAS, By the close of 2025, nearly one year after the
22 guardianship provisions of the KIND Act went into effect,
23 Illinois achieved its highest rate ever of permanency for

1 children in care two or more years, due to record numbers of
2 adoptions and guardianships that DCFS finalized in 2025; this
3 rate is only expected to rise with the continual rollout and
4 implementation of the KIND Act; and

5 WHEREAS, In March of this year, Illinois was recognized as
6 the nation's leader in the placement of children with
7 relatives by the United States Department of Health and Human
8 Services, in part due to DCFS's dedicated commitment to
9 implementing the KIND Act and its kin-first approach; Illinois
10 is one of 19 states and six tribes for which the Children's
11 Bureau has approved plans to differentiate licensing standards
12 for kinship providers; and

13 WHEREAS, After regional testing, DCFS activated relative
14 caregiver certification statewide on March 9, 2026, providing
15 increased financial support to certified relative caregivers
16 on par with the board payments provided to foster parents and
17 bringing new federal funding to the State to subsidize this
18 increase; and

19 WHEREAS, In May 2026, the American Civil Liberties Union
20 of Illinois released a suite of resources regarding the KIND
21 Act, providing information for parents, relatives, and court
22 stakeholders to learn about and advocate for the rights
23 provided under the KIND Act; and

1 WHEREAS, In honor of National Foster Care Month being
2 observed in May and International Day of the Family being
3 observed on May 15, it is fitting to recognize the progress,
4 improvements, and implementation efforts made by DCFS in
5 furtherance of a stronger child welfare system and a
6 commitment to relative engagement, placement, and care; and

7 WHEREAS, Throughout 2026, the number of children in care
8 has continued to decrease, with the current caseload number at
9 the lowest it has been in the last five years, indicating that
10 as DCFS continues to improve its efforts to ensure relative
11 supports and relational permanence, the overall outcomes for
12 children can only grow stronger; while, as always, there is
13 more progress to be made, the momentum and tangible changes
14 that the KIND Act has set into motion are commendable
15 achievements, explaining why other jurisdictions are
16 consulting with Illinois as they consider bringing reforms
17 similar to the KIND Act to their own jurisdictions; and

18 WHEREAS, As recently reported by the U.S. Department of
19 Health and Human Services' Assistant Secretary for Planning
20 and Evaluation, Illinois was recognized as having the highest
21 percentages of children living with relatives or kin while
22 entering care and in foster care, 76% and 57% respectively,
23 compared to all other states; comprehensive child welfare

1 policymaking, with an emphasis on kinship care policy, must
2 remain at the forefront as a state-level priority and continue
3 to be supported through all available legislative, executive,
4 and judicial tools, including continual discussion and reform
5 efforts within the General Assembly, as the legislature plays
6 an important role in the systemic change of DCFS; therefore,
7 be it

8 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL
9 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we acknowledge the
10 accomplishments and implementation progress of the Kinship in
11 Demand (KIND) Act, recognizing the time and resources devoted
12 by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
13 (DCFS) and the leadership of the Governor's Office, and we
14 urge DCFS to aggressively continue implementation of the KIND
15 Act to deliver permanency to more children and to keep
16 families together even when reunification is not possible,
17 ensuring children have loving, stable homes; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That we urge DCFS to execute needed revisions to
19 Rule 415 one year after all statutory provisions went into
20 effect, as discussed at the Joint Committee on Administrative
21 Rules hearing in June 2025, incorporating revisions based on
22 identified issues and lessons learned from DCFS's
23 implementation efforts to ensure that the KIND Act can be
24 properly and uniformly enforced across the State and that the

1 spirit of all statutory requirements is fully realized, such
2 as the harmonization of statute and rule related to the
3 placement decision review processes; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That we urge DCFS to actively pursue the
5 recently announced federal funding opportunities by the U.S.
6 Department of Health and Human Services Administration for
7 Children & Families to support kinship navigator services and
8 to bolster the implementation of the KIND Act, providing
9 greater supports for kin involved with DCFS throughout the
10 State of Illinois; and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That we urge DCFS to provide continual, updated
12 training opportunities and resource materials for staff,
13 tailored to meet the changing needs of caseworkers, families,
14 and overall departmental cohesion and effectiveness, with a
15 focus on building relational permanence for children; and be
16 it further

17 RESOLVED, That we urge the Administrative Office of the
18 Illinois Courts to provide effective statewide judicial
19 education on the KIND Act and support the judiciary's efforts
20 to diligently implement the components of the KIND Act,
21 including the necessary oversight to enforce the KIND Act's
22 provisions requiring DCFS to meaningfully engage in initial
23 and ongoing family finding and relative engagement efforts,

1 consistently place children with kin unless it is contrary to
2 children's best interests, and meaningfully consider
3 guardianship as a permanency option when reunification is not
4 possible; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
6 delivered to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of
7 Illinois, the Administrative Director of the Illinois Courts,
8 and the Director of the Department of Children and Family
9 Services.