

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

The Informing Grandfamilies Act of 2021 – S.4443

U.S. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and Todd Young (R-IN)

Why do we need the Informing Grandfamilies Act?

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) study found that **more than 2.7 million children** in the United States are being raised by grandparents and other relatives, also known as kinship caregivers – about 18 times more than those placed in foster care. While experts believe these numbers have climbed due to the opioid epidemic and COVID-19 pandemic, there is a long history of grandparents and other relatives stepping in to care for children when parents are unable.

Taking on a kinship caregiving role can come unexpectedly and with little help. Grandparents and other relatives often face challenges affording the costs of raising a child and may postpone retirement, downsize a home, or deprioritize their own medical needs in order to pay for their new caregiving expenses. The pandemic has only exacerbated economic hardship and increased health concerns for these families.

Many relative caregivers are eligible for federal and state assistance, like the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, to help make ends meet. However, many grandfamilies are not aware of other government programs that are available to help with basic needs. Others may not be accessing all of the available benefits through their state's TANF program. Many relative caregivers may benefit from more information about how to become a legal guardian, foster parent or adoptive parent.

What will the Informing Grandfamilies Act do?

The Informing Grandfamilies Act will require states to use their existing channel of communication with grandfamilies who are receiving or applying for TANF cash assistance to provide these families with information about other available resources. Specifically, the bill will require states to provide these grandfamilies with information on:

- Potential options for the family to become formal foster parents or legal guardians to the child and to receive support on the child's behalf;
- Additional TANF supports that are offered by the state; and
- Contact information for the state's Kinship Navigator Program or other state agencies and community organizations that guide the family toward other support programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Medicaid.

Original Cosponsors: Senators Tim Scott and Mark Kelly

Endorsing Organizations: Generations United and the National Council on Aging