



The Senate of the State of New Hampshire

107 North Main Street, Concord, N.H. 03301-4951

November 18, 2019

The Honorable Christopher Sununu
Governor of New Hampshire
State House, Room 208
Concord, NH 03301

The Honorable Donna Soucy
President of the Senate
State House, Room 302
Concord, NH 03301

The Honorable Stephen Shurtleff
Speaker of the House
State House, Room 308
Concord, NH 03301

RE: SB 131, Commission to Study Grandfamilies in New Hampshire

Dear Governor Sununu, Senate President Soucy and Speaker Shurtleff:

On behalf of the Commission to Study Grandfamilies in New Hampshire, please find the report on their findings as well as recommendations.

Respectfully,

MaryLou Beaver
Chair, Commission to Study Grandfamilies

cc: Tammy L. Wright, Senate Clerk
Paul C. Smith, Clerk of the House
Michael York, State Librarian



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INTERIM REPORT OF THE COMMISSION TO STUDY GRANDFAMILIES IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

(SB 131, 170-G:17-a - Chapter 84:1 - Laws of 2019)

November 1, 2019

It is estimated that there are more than 12,000 New Hampshire grandparents raising their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, either through the NH DHHS' Foster Parent program, through legal guardianship, or through an informal agreement with their grandchild's parent(s).

The babies, children and youth who enter a relative's care, often have experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), placing them at higher risk for behavior issues and health problems both now and as they age.

When children cannot remain with their parents, placing them with grandparents and other relatives reduces future trauma and can help to mitigate the impact of past trauma. The stability, supportive relationships and extended family network that grandfamilies provide to children, align with research-based protective factors that promote resiliency and healing.

The current foster care system accounts for only a small portion of children in kinship care. For each child in foster care with a relative, there are twenty children outside of foster care with a relative. Nationally, nearly 2.7 million grandparents are responsible for their grandchildren. About 35% of these grandparents are age 60 or older. Fifty-eight percent are still in the workforce, and nearly a quarter are living with a disability. More than one in five of these grandparents lives below the poverty line.¹

Through the support of state legislators, advocates, and grandparent caregiver voices, two bills were passed during the 2019 legislative session that offer support to New Hampshire's grandfamilies. SB261 would require that all staff and providers with an agreement to provide protective and preventive childcare through DCYF be trained in trauma informed care within two years.

SB131 re-established a Commission to Study Grandfamilies in New Hampshire.

The commission shall address issues related to grandfamilies in New Hampshire. The commission's duties shall include, but not be limited to:

- (a) Review of current data regarding grandfamilies in New Hampshire.
- (b) Review of current barriers facing grandparents who are raising children in New Hampshire.
- (c) Identification of causes of issues affecting New Hampshire grandfamilies.
- (d) Development of corrective actions for addressing issues facing grandfamilies in New Hampshire.
- (e) Identification of current actions being taken to assist grandfamilies in New Hampshire and their effectiveness.

The Commission to Study GrandFamilies has held two meetings as of November 1, 2019. Members elected MaryLou Beaver to chair the commission and Senator Martha Hennessey as vice chair at its organizational meeting on September 6, 2019.

Commission members have formed 4 workgroups which will meet after regularly scheduled commission meetings and through videoconferencing during the winter and spring.

The workgroups will focus on the following:

1. Availability of services for grandparents/availability of services for grandchildren/healthcare issues/housing issues.
2. Investigating federal funding streams to support grand families.
3. Data – identify needs and collection tools available
4. Guardianship Financial Assistance Program/Issues facing grandparents prior to and post adoption/Review kinship policies/procedures in our courts/review current DCYF regulatory environment related to relative foster parenting licensing.

Each workgroup will present their findings and recommendations to the commission at its May 2020 meeting for further discussion and action.

The commission will reach out to community and state-wide agencies and organizations to present information regarding these issues, provide technical assistance, and inform or advise the commission of any legislative actions, statutory regulations, or outreach being conducted in each of these areas at its regular monthly meetings.

The commission will submit a final report of its findings and any recommendations for proposed legislation to the president of the senate, the speaker of the house of

representatives, the senate clerk, the house clerk, the governor, and the state library on or before September 1, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,

MaryLou Beaver – Family Assistance Advisory Council
Senator Martha Hennessey
Representative Mary Freitas
Representative Kimberly Rice
Representative Sharon Nordgren
Tracey Tarr – DHHS – BEAS
Jennifer Glidden – DHHS - BFA
Geraldo Pilarski – DHHS - DCYF
Susan Allen-Samuel – NAMI NH
Cathleen Coburn – Grandparent
Christina D'Allessandro – MomsRising
Kenneth Darsney – NH Principals Association
Roger Desrosiers – AARP NH
Dr. Patricia Edwards – NH Pediatric Society
Joseph Hoebeke – NH Association of Chiefs of Police
Keith Kuenning – Waypoint NH
Jerry Larson – Casa of NH
Skip Murphy – Grandparent representing Department of Education
Rosemary Nugent – Grandparent
Karen Welford – Family Support NH
Rebecca Woitkowski – New Futures
Diane Yeo - Grandparent