ELECTRONIC SIGN-ON LETTER TO GOVERNOR,
FOR GROUPS CONCERNED ABOUT KINSHIP CARE, Spring 2013

Dear Governor Beshear,

We are writing to urge you to restore the recently announced cuts to the Kinship Care Program.  The 2010 Census shows that Kentucky ranks 2nd in the nation for the percent of relatives and kin caring for children.

* 63,500 extended families—grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other kin—step up to raise Kentucky children when their natural parents are unable to do so.  This is 6 percent of all the Commonwealth’s children.  Reasons leading to these kinship arrangements are many—parental death, military deployment, drug addiction, mental or physical illness, incarceration, child abuse or neglect, homelessness, and more.
* Approximately 632 of these arrangements are kinship foster care, 9 percent of all the children in foster care.

Kinship care represents the best of our values—families rich and poor, everywhere in this state, stepping up to take care of their own!  [AARP GRANDFACTS](http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/relationships/friends-family/grandfacts/grandfacts-kentucky.pdf) tells us that these kinship caregivers reflect exactly the state’s racial demographics:  87 percent are white, 10 percent are black, and 3 percent are Hispanic.

Most important, the Annie E. Casey’s most recent policy report ([*Stepping Up for Kids*](http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid=%7b642BF3F2-9A85-4C6B-83C8-A30F5D928E4D%7d)*,*December 2012) reviews the extensive body of research studying kinship care alumni in comparison with alumni of traditional foster care, concluding that children and youth do so much better in kinship care, it should always be the first option considered for those who have experienced abuse or neglect.  Research shows that children who live in kinship care benefit from (1) the sustained opportunity to build positive relationships with adult role models; (2) consistent educational experiences with minimal disruptions and frequent use of educational support services; (3) a positive sense of self that seems to come from the simple reality of permanence; and (4) significantly fewer serious mental health problems than peers who grow up in non-kin foster care.

In addition, kinship care even at the previous reimbursement rate is by far the least expensive form of out-of-home care.  A kinship care subsidy for grandparents and other close relatives costs the state just $300 a month, while payments to foster care parents costs around $600 a month (a conservative comparison that does not even account for the additional state costs for case workers or residential care).

We expect better as a state. Our families deserve better. Our children, Kentucky’s future, deserve better. Budgets are about priorities.  Research shows that kinship care is the most effective and least expensive way to prepare maltreated children and youth for adulthood.

We urge you to do whatever is necessary to ensure that the April 1 cuts to all children’s programs, including the Kinship Care Program do not go into effect.

Sincerely,