

New York State Citizen Review Panels

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Memorandum in Support

Kinship Guardianship Assistance

The New York State Citizen Review Panels support the proposed Kinship Guardianship Assistance program included in the Governor's Article VII legislation.

In their *2009 Annual Report and Recommendations*, the three New York State Citizen Review Panels called for a 50% reduction in the number of children in foster care. One of the key strategies recommended to reach this goal is to implement the proposed subsidized guardianship option for kin.

For many low-income families who are now caring for relatives' children, the Governor's proposal offers the opportunity to provide a more permanent living arrangement for those children in foster care. Most of these "kin" caregivers are grandparents living on fixed incomes, who are willing to provide a permanent home, but they cannot afford to do so without financial assistance. The Kinship Guardianship Assistance program will eliminate many barriers for these families.

Many children and youth have been in foster care far too long, and at some point, returning home and adoption cease to be an option. The older the child, the less likely he or she will be adopted. Kinship-Guardianship arrangements can play an important role in these children's lives. Research studies have demonstrated that because kin placements are more stable, they are likely to lead to better outcomes for these youth due to less disruption to their lives, and importantly, sibling relationships are more likely to be maintained.

In addition, the governor's proposal has the potential to reduce the disproportionality and disparities found in the child welfare system, problems the Citizen Review Panels have long recommended be addressed. Kinship guardianship assistance has proved to be a more culturally sensitive option for minority families than adoption.

As citizens charged with reviewing the policies, procedures and practices in child protective services, we strongly believe that child welfare reforms can lead to cost savings and improve families' lives in New York State. The Kinship Guardianship Assistance program offers an important path to permanency for those children who cannot return home to their parents and for whom adoption is not an option. Therefore, we strongly urge your support for kinship guardianship assistance as included in Article VII budget bill.

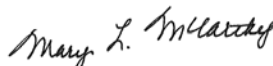
Sincerely,



David Lansner
Co-Chair
NYC panel



Elba Montalvo
Co-Chair
NYC Panel



Mary McCarthy
Chair
Eastern Panel



Ellen Kennedy
Chair
Western Panel

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