



Prevent Child Abuse New York  
4 Global View  
Troy, NY 12180

April 30, 2019

Honorable Senator Diane Savino  
LOB 315  
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Savino:

Prevent Child Abuse New York urges Governor Cuomo to enact S.2714/A.569 into law. We believe that this legislation will help strengthen families, one of our core missions.

This bill requires counties to refer kinship caregivers to Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) kinship programs that provide critical services, including assistance with kinship public benefits, caregiving options, and other needed supports. Assisting kinship families ensures that children have the best outcomes, remaining in stable homes and avoiding foster care placements.

In New York State, grandparents, other relatives, and family friends provide care for an estimated 195,000 children not living with their parents, with less than 3,700 of these children in foster care. Children live with kin for reasons similar to why they enter foster care, including parental abuse and neglect, substance abuse, abandonment, incarceration, mental illness, and other unfortunate circumstances.

Kinship caregivers are an established resource for children and often have contact with local department of social services. Departments engage kinship caregivers when children are at risk of placement in foster care and when caregivers seek the special non-parent public benefit grant. In both instances, statutes require departments to provide information about benefits and "options" for care. But despite the requirements, it is widely documented that caregivers often are not adequately informed and do not access available benefits and caregiver options.

The best way to ensure proper information distribution is to require departments to provide caregivers with contact information for OCFS-administered independent kinship services providers. Twenty-two local kinship programs and the statewide Kinship Navigator are primarily tasked with providing information about such benefits and options to all caregivers.

Referrals will ensure that all engaged kinship caregivers and the children in their care have full access to services. For this reason, we urge the Governor to enact S2714/A569 into law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tim Hathaway', written over a horizontal line.

Tim Hathaway  
Executive Director