

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Idaho Grandparents, Youth Urge Congress to Fix Foster Care Now

*Grandparents, Relatives and Youth from 43 States participated in Capitol Hill Fly In Day
Asking for Federal Support for Foster Children and Relative Caregivers*

Washington, D.C. – James Herrmann from IDAHO participated in a national outreach effort on Capitol Hill to secure Congressional support of legislation that would help IDAHO children living with relatives leave foster care for good and assist their caregivers in securing needed resources. In all, more than 80 grandparents, aunts and uncles, youth, child welfare advocates and others from 43 states participated in the day-long event on Capitol Hill, and met with more than 250 Congressional members and staffers.

Participants in the National Fly In Day from IDAHO along with Mr. Herrmann included his wife Judy, and also Emily Hoyt from the southern part of the state. James and his wife have been foster parents for 18 years and are currently trainers for the Idaho Child Protective Services new foster and adoptive parent's course which is designed to give extra skills to parents of children who may have emotional and/or abuse issues. James states that relatives as caregivers have become a new trend in their parenting classes with 70 to 80 percent of attendees being relatives. And this number represents only those who are willing to give up custody of related children to the state. Emily works for the Center on Aging and has taken on a large role in helping grandparents and other relatives who become caregivers to receive the help they need.

Grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other relatives in IDAHO and across the nation have taken on the responsibility of ensuring the safety and well-being of roughly 125,000 children living in foster care. Research shows that children in foster care placements with relatives are more likely to remain with their brothers or sisters and less likely to change schools. However, as long as these children remain in the foster care system, the government is still responsible for making decisions about their education, immunizations and normal, daily permissions such as school photographs or field trips.

The bipartisan Kinship Caregiver Support Act (H.R. 2188/S. 661) allows states to continue to provide assistance to a foster child living with relatives to help the child exit foster care for good through a subsidized guardianship, similar to assistance provided to many children adopted from foster care. Some states offer guardianship programs, but they are primarily funded with state funds. The Kinship Caregiver Support Act would ensure federal support for guardianships as another route for children to leave foster care safely and permanently.

“Many times guardianships are a great way for children living with relatives to leave foster care safely when reunification with their parents or adoption isn't required or even possible.” said Mr. Herrmann. “Federal support would ensure that children entering foster care in the future will not spend one day longer than necessary in the system when a relative is willing and able to take them in. This bill would require relatives to be notified in the event of child removal keeping some kids out of the system completely. It would help grandparents and other relatives caring for

children to have access to the same resources as foster and adoptive parents and gives them navigational help in finding those services. It also allows for states to determine where and how their childcare dollars can best be used.”

Federally supported guardianships:

Are proven effective at helping children leave foster care safely

Would mean more cases closed and fewer children in foster care

Were recommended by a 2007 report from the Government Accountability Office as a way to reduce racial disparities in foster care.

With passage of the Kinship Caregiver Support Act, nearly 15,000 children living with relatives in foster care could leave the system for good. These children have lived with their relatives in the system for more than a year and a court has decided that reunification with their parents or adoption is not appropriate. The Act would also make it easier for relative caregivers to get information about local services and supports, provide relatives with prompt notice when children are taken into foster care, and extend education and training vouchers to children who leave foster care for guardianships or adoption after age 14.

ABOUT THE KIDS ARE WAITING CAMPAIGN: *Kids Are Waiting: Fix Foster Care Now*, a project of The Pew Charitable Trusts, is a national, nonpartisan campaign dedicated to ensuring that all children in foster care have the safe, permanent families they deserve through reform of the federal financing structure that governs our nation's foster care program. For more information visit: www.kidsarewaiting.org and www.youtube.com/kidsarewaiting.

James is the Region One board member of the Idaho Children's Trust Fund, an organization created by the Idaho legislature in 1985 to provide grant funding to programs that work to prevent child abuse and neglect in Idaho. ICTF also provides training and technical assistance on child abuse prevention issues and an annual Strengthening Families to Prevent Child Abuse conference. The *Idaho Children's Trust Fund* is also the Idaho Chapter of *Prevent Child Abuse America*. You can find more information about ICTF/PCAI on their website, <http://idahochildrenstrustfund.state.id.us/>.

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