

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 17, 2023

Rebecca Jones Gaston
Commissioner, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families
Administration for Children and Families (ACF)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, D.C.

Re: Notice for Public Comment
Proposed Separate Licensing Standards for Relative or Kinship Foster Family Homes
Document Number: 2023-03005, RIN 0970-AC91

Dear Commissioner Jones Gaston,

We write to express support for the proposed rule entitled *Proposed Separate Licensing Standards for Relative or Kinship Foster Family Homes*. We appreciate that the proposed rule would align federal regulations with Congressional intent by reducing barriers to kinship foster care placement, which would provide more opportunities for vulnerable children and youth to be cared for by the people who know and love them. By allowing states and tribes the flexibility to create distinct kin-specific licensing and approval standards, this rule will ease the burdens on kin caregivers, improve outcomes for families, and make it easier for states and tribes to place children in homes where they can thrive.

For decades, the Senate Committee on Finance has played a leading role in the enactment of bipartisan policies to support kinship care, including through the passage of the *Families First Prevention Services Act* and the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act*. Both laws aimed to ensure more children could grow and develop to their full potential in safe, stable, and loving kin homes.

This proposed rule is a fitting continuation of that work. Notably, the proposed rule would empower states and tribes to set separate licensing standards for relative and kin caregivers under the Foster Care, Prevention and Permanency Program that acknowledge unique strengths and challenges experienced by kinship caregivers. This change would make it easier to license kinship and family caregivers as foster parents, while still maintaining important safety standards, such as background checks, as a condition of licensing. The proposed rule would also ensure that states and tribes are providing kin caregivers with the same financial support, via Title IV-E foster maintenance payments, that are afforded to non-relative caregivers. This will help to close the financial gap between licensed kinship caregivers and non-relative foster parents. Finally, the proposed rule would permit the child welfare workforce to more easily assess placements of children and youth in a foster family home by streamlining the definition to include only the home of an individual or family. Ultimately, this rule will further our shared goal of supporting the safety, permanency, and well-being of children.

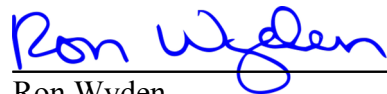
As Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Finance, we are dedicated to ensuring that our most vulnerable children have every chance of success and that they are able to

grow up in safe, stable, loving homes. We appreciate ACF's efforts at advancing this common-sense rule and urge its finalization and swift implementation.

Sincerely,



Michael D. Crapo
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Finance



Ron Wyden
United States Senator
Chairman, Committee on
Finance

Cc:

January Contreras, Assistant Secretary, Administration for Children and Families, U.S.
Department of Health and Human Services