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**Leading Child Welfare, Aging Organizations Ask Nation:
Celebrate Grandparents Day by Urging Congress to Support Grandparents,
Other Relatives Raising Children**

WASHINGTON, DC – In observance of Grandparent’s Day on September 9, prominent state and national child welfare, aging and advocacy organizations have joined forces to urge Congressional action on legislation designed to help the growing number of grandparents and other relatives raising children. The organizations have established a toll-free number for the week of September 10 to 14 to encourage grandparents and others to call Congress and urge their support of the Kinship Caregiver Support Act.

Approximately 2.5 million children across the country – including over 125,000 children in foster care - are being cared for by grandparents and other relatives without either parent present. The bipartisan Kinship Caregiver Support Act would help link relative caregivers, both inside and outside the formal child welfare system, to a broad range of services to help the children in their care; allow states to use federal funds for subsidized guardianship payments to relatives for the children they are raising in the foster care system; and require child welfare agencies to notify grandparents and other relatives within 60 days of the removal of a child from the custody of the child’s parents.

“We are asking all Americans to celebrate Grandparents Day by calling on Congress to support legislation that will make a real difference for thousands of children and the grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives who are giving them a permanent, loving home,” said Donna Butts, executive director of Generations United.

Studies show that children who live in foster care with grandparents or other relatives are as safe, if not safer, than children placed in non-relatives homes and are more likely to remain with their brothers and sisters, to attend the same schools and remain connected to their communities and their culture. However, if grandparents or other relatives become the legal guardians of these children, the families lose funds they depend on for food, medicine, and clothing, as well as services like tutoring and counseling. A federally subsidized guardianship program would allow nearly 20,000 children and families across the nation to leave foster care by granting relatives continued access to the help they need.

Members of the coalition to support children and relatives caring for them include: AARP, the Alliance for Children and Families, the Child Welfare League of America, the Children’s Defense Fund, the Center for Law and Social Policy, the County Welfare Directors Association of California, the Public Children’s Services Association of Ohio, and Generations United.

The toll free number is 1-888-226-0627 and will be active between Monday, September 10 and Friday, September 14, 2007.

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