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## **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Urge “Fix Foster Care to Help More Children Leave Foster Care for Permanent, Loving Families”**

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Today on Capitol Hill, grandparents raising their grandchildren joined child welfare advocates, researchers, policymakers and others in speaking out about the need for foster care reform at an event sponsored by Generations United. Titled “Home for the Holidays, Fulfilling the Dream of 20,000 Foster Children Waiting for a Permanent Family,” the event focused on improving the lives of the children currently in foster care, and finding solutions that would allow them to leave the foster care system to join safe, permanent, loving families more quickly.

“Children who enter foster care remain in the system for an average of three years, experience several placements, and are separated from brothers and sisters, friends and family while in care,” said Donna Butts, executive director of Generations United. “This uncertainty and anxiety exacts a toll on their physical, emotional and educational well-being, and, for those youth who age out of the foster care system at 18, the results can be even worse: homelessness, unemployment, incarceration or illness. We must do better for these children.”

The event underscored the need to develop and implement innovative options in order to address the individual needs of children and help them exit foster care to join safe, permanent families. Subsidized guardianship is currently only available to a limited number of children living in certain states. Federal support could help make it available to all children in foster care who need it, and could help thousands of children for whom reunification with their parents or adoption are not viable options leave foster care.

Grandparents Glenn and Charlotte Price are raising their granddaughter and two grandsons, and shared their experiences at the event. While they felt that adoption was right for their oldest grandchild, subsidized guardianship was the best option to help their two younger grandchildren exit foster care.

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“Adopting our younger grandchildren would have meant terminating their parents’ rights, which would have been devastating for their relationship with their parents. They can’t live with them, but they still love and visit them,” said Glenn. “Our social worker told us about subsidized guardianship, which gives us permanent guardianship of our grandchildren and provides the financial resources we need to provide for them. Without this subsidy, we simply wouldn’t have been able to take the children in.”

Subsidized guardianship is a federally supported program that would allow an estimated 20,000 children to exit the foster care system. Currently these children – for whom a judge has determined that neither adoption nor reunification are viable permanence options - live with grandparents, aunts, uncles or other relatives while remaining in foster care. They cannot leave foster care without losing federal foster care assistance, used to pay for everyday necessities like food and clothing that these children need in order to thrive and survive, and is critically important to grandparents and relatives on a fixed income. So the children remain in foster care, which means that they undergo routine visits from social workers, court appearances, and must get permission for activities like school field trips, out of state visits to other family members or sleepovers at a friend’s house.

Recommended by the national, nonpartisan Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care in its report on reforming the nation’s foster care system, subsidized guardianship has proven successful in the states where it has been implemented.

“For children in the Illinois foster care system who cannot be reunited with their birth parents or adopted, subsidized guardianship increases the number who can exit the system to live with permanent families,” stated Leslie Cohen, a research specialist at the Children and Family Research Center at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. “Research shows that these newly created families are just as stable and safe from subsequent abuse and neglect as those children who are adopted from the foster care system, and have better outcomes than children in traditional foster care. All of this is accomplished without increasing public spending.”

Subsidized guardianship is one of the strategies recommended by the Pew Commission in its report to overhaul foster care. The recommendations focus on the need to improve court oversight of foster care and the need to improve current federal foster care financing. The Commission recommended that this funding be used to support an array of supports and services that could help keep families together and ensure that children and youth could join permanent families more quickly, rather than merely being used to place children in formal foster care.

Stated grandmother Charlotte Price, “We need to fix foster care so that more children can leave foster care for permanent, loving families. Our children deserve nothing less.”

**ABOUT GENERATIONS UNITED:** Generations United is the only national membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people

through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations and individuals representing more than 70 million Americans. Since 1986, GU has served as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU acts as a catalyst for stimulating collaboration between aging, children, and youth organizations providing a forum to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation. For more information visit [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org)