

An Act Expanding Access to Adoptions

H.243 (Rep. Jack Lewis) and S.123 (Sen. Joan Lovely)

The Issue:

- Family members in Massachusetts are prohibited from adopting their younger siblings, nephews, or nieces, even when the older family member is independent, stable, and can financially support the child.
- Guardianships are available for family members, but only provide temporary caregiving support. Adoptions are permanent.

The Solution:

- This legislation allows for appropriate kin to permanently adopt family members when it is in the child's best interest.

Importance of Permanency & Kinship:

- Children benefit exponentially from the support of stable, nurturing family connections.
- Children in kinship care have equivalent, if not better long-term mental and physical health, schooling and employment outcomes than children raised by non-relative foster parents.¹
- Family members can better weather a child's emotional crisis or related behavioral issues, preventing child from bouncing between multiple foster placements.²

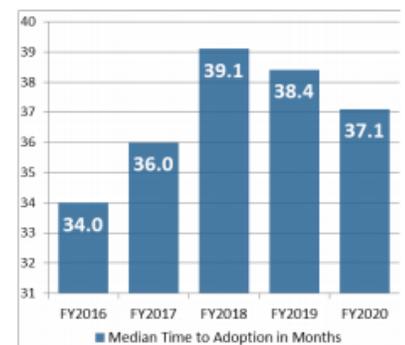
The Pressure Points:

Adoption Waitlists are Ballooning³

- At the end of FY20, 2,394 children (0-17) with the goal of adoption in DCF were still waiting to be adopted.
- 850 children waited a median time of 37.1 months for an adoption.
- Rates of guardianship increased by 3.9% from FY2015-FY2019.

The Coronavirus Pandemic & Struggling Families

- Our state continues to reel from the Coronavirus pandemic and resulting economic downturn that has devastated families and communities.
- Kinship caregivers are an overlooked solution that can provide reliable permanency for children who have experienced trauma and are at risk for related health and social effects.



¹ Needs of Kinship Care Families and Pediatric Practice, Apr 2017 available at <https://policylab.chop.edu/blog/kinship-care-opioid-epidemic-overlooked-caregivers-overlooked-victims>

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³ Department of Children and Families Annual Report, 2020 available at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcf-annual-reportfy2020/download>