

For Immediate Release

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Bill Expanding Kinship Adoption Options Goes to Governor Baker for Signature

BOSTON, MA - The Children's League of Massachusetts is thrilled with the passage of CLM priority legislation Expanding Access to Adoption by the Massachusetts House and Senate, and we urge Governor Charlie Baker to sign this legislation without delay.

This legislation makes a technical change allowing kin to adopt their younger siblings, aunts, or uncles. Previously, only guardianships were available for these family members, providing temporary caregiver support. The new law allowing for these expanded kinship adoptions creates a permanent solution resulting in greater stability for the child and keeps extended families and communities intact, helping children feel safe, connected, and supported.

We are grateful for the work done by the bill's lead sponsors, Representative Jack Lewis (D-7th Middlesex) and Senator Joan Lovely (D-Salem) for their leadership on this issue over multiple sessions to get this bill passed.

Said Rep. Lewis: "I am extremely grateful to Senator Joan Lovely for her partnership in filing and passing this law and to House and Senate Leadership and all our colleagues for sending this bill to the governor's desk. This change to current adoption laws will provide greater permanency and support to many children and families in our Commonwealth."

Research demonstrates that children do best when families stay together. When it becomes necessary to remove a child from their biological parents, keeping family connections is essential to the child's mental and emotional health and well-being, as well as their sense of safety, stability, and belonging. Family members can better weather a child's emotional crisis or related behavioral issues, preventing children from bouncing between multiple foster placements.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has left too many vulnerable youth without parents, making familial relationships and bonds more important than ever," said Senator Joan B. Lovely. "I am proud to partner with Rep. Jack Lewis to ensure our children are cared for by the people who know and love them."

Expanded kinship adoption is also a direct and simple strategy to mitigate the disproportionality in adoptions. According to DCF data, white children are twice as likely to be adopted as Black and Hispanic children, despite these groups being nearly equal in having adoption as a permanency plan. The Children's League Adoption Task Force and partners in the sector identified expanded kinship adoption as a strategy to increase the likelihood that minority children with adoption as a permanency goal are able to find culturally relevant forever homes.

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The Children's League of Massachusetts (CLM) is a statewide non-profit association of private and public organizations and individuals that collectively advocate for public policies and quality services that are in the best interest of children, youth, and families in the Commonwealth. It is through public education and advocacy that the Children's League promotes the availability, accessibility, and quality of these needed services.