

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Arlen Siegfroid at 1:30 P.M. on January 25, 2006 in Room 313-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representative John Edmonds- excused
Representative Anthony Brown- excused
Representative Dick Kelsey- excused
Representative Kenny Wilk- excused

Committee staff present:

Athena Andaya, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Dennis Hodgins, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Mary Torrence, Revisor of Statutes Office
Carol Doel, Committee Secretary

Conferees:

Representative Faust-Goudeau
Representative Ted Powers
Greg Dye
Secretary Gary Daniels - SRS
Bill Dean, Silver Haired Legislator
Mike Farmer, Kansas Catholic Conference
B.J. Gore, Kansas Childrens' Service League
Kim Strunk
Brenda Arrera
Susie Lindsay
Katherine Turner
Alma Smith
Cynthia Crawford
Catherine Johnson
Bessie Barnes
Leann Hochstetler
Kathy Bullcoming
Cheryl Collier
Erie Kennedy
Frank Smith
Irv Hoffman, President of Silver Haired Legislators

Others attending:

See attached list.

Vice-Chairman Siegfroid opened the floor for bill introductions. There were none and the floor was opened for public hearing on **SB 62** - *Grandparents as foster parents program*

Representative Faust-Goudeau was recognized and gave testimony in support of **SB 62** relating that she sees an urgent need for this bill in her district which is highly populated with a constituency of senior citizens and a large percentage are grandparents rearing grandchildren and are in need of additional financial assistance. She urged the passage of **SB 62**. (Attachment 1)

Greg Dye, a resident of Wichita, expressed his concern regarding the needs of additional financial assistance when grandparents are rearing their and encouraged the passage of **SB 62**. (Attachment 2)

Gary Daniels, Secretary of Social and Rehabilitation Services addressed the Committee stating that SRS proposes that **SB 62** be modified as noted in their attachment and the title changed from Grandparents as Foster Parents to Grandparents as Care givers. Mr. Daniels further related that the proposed modifications to **SB 62** recognize the financial burden on grandparents who are care givers and emphasizes the importance

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE House Federal and State Affairs Committee at 1:30 P.M. on January 25, 2006 in Room 313-S of the Capitol.

of supporting families. ([Attachment 3](#))

Bill Dean, a member of the Silver Haired Legislators, gave testimony supporting **SB 62** relating that this creates an SRS administered program which would reimburse grandparents whose annual income is less than 100% of the federal poverty level. ([Attachment 4](#))

Mike Farmer, Executive Director of the Kansas Catholic Conference, which is the public policy office of the Catholic Church in Kansas, presented testimony favoring **SB 62** stating they recognize the benefits of children being raised by family and not by strangers and respectfully request that the Committee consider the bill favorable for passage. ([Attachment 5](#))

Representing the Kansas Children's Service League was B.J. Gore, M.S. supporting **SB 62**. The bill would offer greater cash assistance to grandparents raising their grandchildren along with greater connection to appropriate services and support. The League offers the Grandparents/Kinship Support Group Program and the Kinship Navigator Program to provide support and services to grandparents and other relatives raising children ([Attachment 6](#))

A number of grandparents who are care givers for children of family members testified before the committee supporting **SB 62**. They explained that while they loved the children very much, there were additional worries regarding schooling expenses, clothing expenses, medical expenses which put a strain on the budget. There are also many challenges as well as changes in life style and concerns regarding their own retirement.

Those care givers testifying were:

Kim Strunk ([Attachment 7](#))

Brenday Arrera ([Attachment 8](#))

Susie Lindsey ([Attachment 9](#))

Katherine Turner ([Attachment 10](#))

Alma Smith ([Attachment 11](#))

Bessie Barnes ([Attachment 12](#))

Leann Hochstetler ([Attachment 13](#))

Cheryl Collier ([Attachment 14](#))

Kathy Bullcoming ([Attachment 15](#))

Cindy Edwards ([Attachment 16](#))

Erie Kennedy ([Attachment 17](#))

Catherine Johnson ([Attachment 18](#))

Cynthia Crawford ([Attachment 19](#))

Frank Smith ([Attachment 20](#))

Representative Ted Powers addressed the committee in support of **SB 62** and related that he was involved in unclaimed state funds and had found \$8000 for one of the care giver conferees.

Written testimony in support of **SB 62** was submitted by:

Phyllis Smith ([Attachment 21](#))

Candace Nelson, Director, Guard Our Children ([Attachment 22](#))

Evelyn Brown ([Attachment 23](#))

Margo Moore ([Attachment 24](#))

Ray and Ginger Michael ([Attachment 25](#))

Barbara Jolly ([Attachment 26](#))

Dora Fleming ([Attachment 27](#))

K. Webb ([Attachment 28](#))

Christine Brown ([Attachment 29](#))

Melchorre DeGraeve ([Attachment 30](#))

President of the Silver Haired Legislators, Irv Hoffmann, appeared before the committee opposing **SB 62**. They have identified two sections of concern in the balloon, Section 4 which addresses the poverty level for eligibility and Section 6 which speaks to the ancillary services such as clothing allowance etc. They

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE House Federal and State Affairs Committee at 1:30 P.M. on January 25, 2006 in Room 313-S of the Capitol.

recommend amending this bill to raise the poverty to 130% and in Section 6 change the word "may" to "shall". If these amendments are made, they will support the bill. (Attachment 31)

With no further business before the committee, the meeting was adjourned.

OLETHA FAUST-GOUDEAU

REPRESENTATIVE, 84TH DISTRICT

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STATE CAPITOL

TOPEKA, KS 66612-1504



TOPEKA

HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

January 25, 2006

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

MEMBER: CORRECTIONS & JUVENILE JUSTICE
ENVIRONMENT
ETHICS & ELECTIONS

**TESTIMONY OF REPRESENTATIVE OLETHA FAUST-GOUDEAU ON
BEHALF OF SENATE BILL 62 BEFORE FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, Representative Edmonds, and Honorable members of the committee.

On behalf of the Kansas Silvered Haired Legislation, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Rep. Edmonds for his willingness to hear Senate Bill 62 so early in the session.

I am honored to appear before you today in support of Senate Bill 62 Grandparents as Care Givers, formerly known as the Grandparents as Foster Parents Bill.

I see an urgent need for this bill in my district, which is highly populated with a constituency of senior citizens and a large percentage are grandparents raising grandchildren and need additional financial assistance. I stand before you today on behalf of those citizens.

Commending foster parents for their willingness to take in children due to unfortunate circumstances of absent parents, foster care may be the only alternative. However, cases in which the grandparents are willing to take the child or children for sake of keeping the family unit together, then we must support this effort by providing financial assistance as received by foster parents offering the same type of service, providing all eligibility requirements are met as so stated in Senate Bill 62.

My Mother raised five grandchildren due to the death of my sister and I witnessed the difficulty she endured. This bill would have certainly helped her. The passage of Senate Bill 62 can assist grandparents in the future while caring for their grandchildren and keeping families together.

I urge approval of Senate Bill 62. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Oletha Faust-Goudeau

Yield to Greg Dye

FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS

Date 1-25-06

Attachment 1

**Thank You Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for allowing
me to speak**

My name is Greg Dye, a resident of Wichita with 7 grandchildren.

I'm not here because I need help, but because others do.

Passing this Senate Bill 62 is a step in the right direction because of the cost
of court and everything else.

Grandparents and Foster parents require assistance when they have
grandchildren live in their home.

Grandchildren cannot deal with the problem when it's not their fault
Our governor has taken the time to address the issue of keeping children in
the home in their budget.

A close relative should also be considered when a foster home is suggested.

This problem must be addressed now because it is pass due.

Another situation that should be addressed is the grandparents' visitation
rights with their grandchildren if denied by anyone.

Reasonable visitation when it is in the best interest of the grandchild.

Reasonable visitation unsupervised when appropriate and feasible may be
frequent and continuing.

Even when there are no problems in the child's family and in a normal
environment.

Please pass this Senate Bill 62

Signed Concerned Citizen,

Greg Dye



FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS

Date 1-25-06

Attachment 2

Kansas Department of

Social and Rehabilitation Services

Gary J. Daniels, Secretary

House Federal and State Affairs Committee
January 25, 2006

SB 62 - Grandparents as Caregivers

Gary J. Daniels, Secretary
785-296-3271

For additional information contact:
Public and Governmental Services Division
Kyle Kessler, Director of Legislative Affairs

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FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS

Date 1-25-06

Attachment 3

Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
Gary J. Daniels, Secretary

House Federal and State Affairs Committee
January 25, 2006

SB 62 - Grandparents as Caregivers

Chairman Edmonds and members of the committee, I am Gary Daniels, Secretary of SRS. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss SB 62 regarding grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren. These grandparents play a significant role in the lives of their grandchildren, often at significant personal sacrifice.

SRS proposes the bill before the committee be modified as noted in the attachment and the title changed from Grandparents as Foster Parents to Grandparents as Caregivers. SB 62 in its current form is a bit misleading. Foster parents are individuals who are licensed to provide foster care, on a short term basis, to children in state custody. They are paid for providing this service at a rate established by the foster care contract provider. The proposed modifications to SB 62 provide for payment to grandparents caring for grandchildren who are not in state custody, for what could be extended periods of time. No license is required. Essentially, the proposed changes provide for a new assistance program for grandparents caring for grandchildren who are not in state custody.

In response to the SRS proposal for amendments to SB 62, the Governor incorporated funding for the program in her proposed FY 2007 budget. The amendments would allow grandparents who are age 50 or older and whose income does not exceed 100 percent of federal poverty level to access benefits of \$200 per month per child, up to a maximum of \$600 a month.

FY 2007 funding levels provide a six month program development period before implementing the program January 1, 2007. Among other things, the development period will be used to establish data tracking systems that will allow better projections of the number of program participants and provide more accurate mechanisms to project program funding requirements.

The program would use only state dollars. The primary reason is that use of federal dollars adds program complexity as well as funding constraints. Federal child welfare funds, for example, can not be used for this program unless the caregiver is a licensed foster home and the child is in state custody. A federal waiver of these requirements is not likely based on the experience of other states. In addition, use of federal funds may include meeting work participation requirements. This may be one reason why many grandparents do not apply for the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

The proposed modifications to SB 62 recognize the financial burden on grandparents who are caregivers and emphasizes the importance of supporting families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. I would be happy to respond to questions.

SENATE BILL No. 62

By Senator Vratil

1-20

10 AN ACT enacting the grandparents as ~~foster parents~~ act; prescribing caregivers
11 powers, duties and functions for the secretary of social and rehabili-
12 tation services.

13
14 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:*

15 Section 1. The provisions of sections 1 through 7, and amendments
16 thereto, shall be known and may be cited as the grandparents as ~~foster~~ caregivers
17 ~~parents~~ act.

18 Sec. 2. As used in the grandparents as ~~foster parents~~ act: caregivers

19 (a) "Program" means the grandparents as ~~foster parents~~ program. caregivers

20 (b) "Secretary" means the secretary of the department of social and
21 rehabilitation services.

22 (c) "Department" means the department of social and rehabilitation
23 services.

24 (d) "~~Maintenance of effort~~" means ~~state funds appropriated for the~~
25 ~~aid to families with dependent children (AFDC), emergency assistance,~~
26 ~~AFDC-related child care and the JOBS program.~~

27 ~~(e) "TANF" or "Temporary assistance for needy families" means the~~
28 ~~federal block grant moneys available to the state for public assistance~~
29 ~~benefits and programs authorized by the personal responsibility and work~~
30 ~~opportunity reconciliation act of 1996 (as amended).~~

31 Sec. 3. (a) In accordance with the provisions of the grandparents as
32 ~~foster parents~~ act and subject to the provisions of appropriation acts, the caregivers
33 secretary shall establish a grandparents as ~~foster parents~~ program within caregivers
34 the department of social and rehabilitation services. The program shall
35 be administered in a manner which recognizes that:

36 (1) The relationship between a child and a parent differs from the
37 relationship between a child and a grandparent ~~acting as a foster parent~~;

38 (2) society and the demands and needs of the members of society
39 change between the time a person raises a child and the time the same
40 person raises a grandchild ~~as a foster child~~;

41 (3) caring for a grandchild ~~as a foster child~~ often places additional
42 financial, social and psychological strain on grandparents with fixed
43 incomes;

1 (4) different parenting skills are necessary when raising a grandchild
2 as a foster child, and many grandparents do not possess such skills, are
3 not aware of how to obtain such skills and cannot afford access to the
4 services necessary to obtain such skills;

5 (5) grandparents acting as ~~foster parents, like nonrelative foster par-~~ caregivers
6 ~~ents,~~ need a support structure, including counseling for both the grand-
7 parent and grandchild, respite care, transportation assistance and child
8 care;

9 ~~(6) the level of care provided by grandparents acting as foster parents~~
10 ~~does not differ from foster care provided by nonrelatives, but reimburse-~~
11 ~~ment for such care is substantially less for grandparents; and~~ (6)

12 ~~(7) grandparents are often unaware of medical and other assistance,~~
13 including cash assistance for which they may be eligible.

14 Sec. 4. (a) If a person meets the financial eligibility requirements
15 developed by the secretary, a grandparent shall be eligible to participate
16 in the program if such grandparent:

17 (1) Is ~~50-60~~ years of age or older; 50

18 (2) has the grandchild placed in such grandparent's custody by the
19 state, is the legal guardian of the grandchild or has other legal custody of
20 the grandchild; and

21 (3) has an annual household income of less than ~~130%~~ 100% of the
22 federal poverty level; and

23 ~~(4) participates in the training available through the program pursu-~~
24 ~~ant to section 6, and amendments thereto.~~

25 (b) A grandparent shall not be eligible to participate in the program
26 if the parent or parents of the child reside with such grandparent.

27 (c) The secretary annually shall review the eligibility of grandparents
28 participating in the program. Grandparents shall be required to meet
29 eligibility requirements each year to continue in the program.

30 Sec. 5. If there are no grandparents of a child who are willing to
31 participate in the program, the secretary may include in the program any
32 other close relative who becomes the legal guardian of the child or obtains
33 legal custody of the child, as granted by a court of competent jurisdiction
34 or through placement by the secretary. In order to participate, such rel-

35 ative must meet the eligibility requirements of subsection (a)(1), (a)(3) (a) (2),
36 and ~~(a)(4)~~ of section 4, and amendments thereto.

37 Sec. 6. By the last quarter of fiscal year 2006 and subject to the pro- A relative qualifying
38 visions of appropriation acts, the secretary: for the program pur-

39 (a) Shall reimburse grandparents in the program for the cost of the shall be considered
40 care of the grandchild in an amount determined by the secretary. The a grandparent for
41 amount of such reimbursement shall not be less than 75% of the amount purposes of the act.

42 of the current foster care payment service provider schedule. Grandpar-
43 ents in the program shall continue to receive reimbursement until the

January 1, 2007

1 child reaches the age of 18 or the age of 21, if such child is in full-time
 2 attendance at a secondary school, postsecondary educational institution
 3 as defined by K.S.A. 74-3201b, and amendments thereto, or an institution
 4 as defined by K.S.A. 74-32,163, and amendments thereto, or is in a state
 5 accredited job training program. Grandparents annually shall submit to
 6 the secretary a sworn statement that the child is living with and receiving
 7 support from the grandparents. A child attending a postsecondary edu-
 8 cational institution or an institution shall be considered as living with the
 9 grandparents. The parent of any child receiving or for which assistance
 10 is received through the program shall remain liable for the support of the
 11 child as required by law;

12 ~~(b) shall establish program requirements including, but not limited~~
 13 ~~to, participation in foster parent training, parenting skills training, child-~~
 14 ~~hood immunizations and other health screenings;~~

15 ~~(c) may provide continuing counseling for the child and grandparent~~
 16 ~~under the program;~~

17 ~~(d) may provide ancillary or support services including, but not lim-~~
 18 ~~ited to, respite care, child care, clothing allowances, and transportation~~
 19 ~~assistance. Eligibility for child care services pursuant to the program shall~~
 20 ~~be based on the same eligibility criteria used for other child care benefits~~
 21 ~~provided by the department. Direct financial assistance shall not be made~~
 22 ~~to a participant in the program until after such participant completes the~~
 23 ~~training required by subsection (b);~~

24 ~~(e) shall provide a medical card and other medical assistance to each~~
 25 ~~child under the program; and~~

26 ~~(f) shall establish criteria for the reduction in cash benefits received~~
 27 ~~by any grandparent providing care for three or more grandchildren under~~
 28 ~~the program.~~

29 Sec. 7. The secretary shall adopt any rules and regulations necessary
 30 to implement the provisions of this act.

31 Sec. 8. ~~(a) Funding for cash benefits and other assistance provided~~
 32 ~~under this act shall be made from the state maintenance of effort funds.~~

33 ~~(b) Grandparents who either are under 50 years of age, or are 50~~
 34 ~~years of age or older and refuse to participate in the training pursuant to~~
 35 ~~subsection (b) but who meet the requirements of subsections (1), (2) and~~
 36 ~~(3) of section 4, and amendments thereto, may apply to the department~~
 37 ~~for foster care reimbursement and assistance. Such cash and noncash~~
 38 ~~assistance shall be funded through the TANF funds. Any work partici-~~
 39 ~~pation and time limit requirements pursuant to the personal responsibility~~
 40 ~~and work opportunity reconciliation act of 1996, as amended, shall apply~~
 41 ~~to all such persons.~~

42 ~~(c) The secretary of social and rehabilitation services shall seek~~
 43 ~~a waiver under federal law to allow title IV-E funds from title IV of~~

(b)
 (c)
 , parenting skills
 training, childhood
 immunizations and
 other health
 screening.
 (d) may
 (e)
 may

1 ~~the federal social security act, or acts amendatory thereof or sup-~~
2 ~~plemental thereto as in effect on July 1, 2005, to be used to fund~~
3 ~~the grandparents as foster parents program. The secretary shall re-~~
4 ~~port to the president of the senate and the speaker of the house of~~
5 ~~representatives on or before August 1, 2005 on the status of such~~
6 ~~waiver.~~

7 ~~(b)~~ The provisions of the grandparents as foster parents ^{act shall not} caregivers
8 be construed to create an entitlement for participants in the program.
9 Sec. 9. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its
10 publication in the statute book.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 62

Before the House Committee on Federal & State Affairs

January 25, 2006

Good afternoon. My name is Bill Dean and I am a member of the Silver Haired Legislature. Today, I want to speak in support of the most recent changes suggested by the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) to Senate Bill 62. This most recent version of the bill is recognized as "the grandparents as caregivers" bill.

"Grandparents as Caregivers" creates an SRS administered program which would reimburse grandparents whose annual income is less than 100% of the federal poverty level. The new SB 62 recognizes that the relationship between a child and a parent differs from the relationship between a child and a grandparent who steps in to assume the parent's role. Times have changed, therefore, today's grandparents who find themselves acting as "parents" learn quickly that rearing a child today is very different from rearing their own children. They find that the financial, social and psychological demands placed on them as parents are an added a strain to the fixed income within which many of them live.

Today's grandparents who are functioning as caregivers for their own grandchildren find that the parenting skills of the past do not necessarily work today. Additionally, most of the grandparents this program is designed to address do not know how to get help from SRS. Many do not even know that help is available to address needs in the areas of school, clothing, food, transportation, every day necessities and new knowledge.

The amendments to SB 62 proposed by SRS will allow grandparents living at 100% of the federal poverty level or below, to receive help. They can learn new parenting skills, what help is available and what help they should ask for such as respite care, counseling for them and their grandchildren, child care, transportation, medical care, etc.

It is a daunting problem for grandparents who find themselves faced with raising their grandchildren. However, it is even a larger problem when the grandparents are living on a fixed income which barely allows them to survive.

I urge you to pass SB 62. It will help many of the 36,000 plus households in which Kansas grandparents find themselves raising their own grandchildren.

I'll be pleased to respond to any questions

Kansas Silver Haired Legislature



FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS

Date 1-25-06

Attachment 4

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Testimony in Support of SB 62

Chairman Edmonds and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of SB 62, which would establish the Grandparents as Foster Parents Act. My name is Mike Farmer and I am the Executive Director of the Kansas Catholic Conference, the public policy office of the Catholic Church in Kansas.

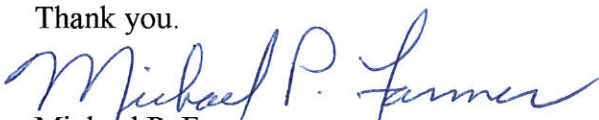
For the last two years the Kansas Catholic Conference has supported this bill which I understand will have some amendments offered after work over the interim by the bill's sponsor, Sen. Vratil, and SRS staff. We intend to offer our support of these amendments.

As we stated last year, the most recent census at that time estimated that there were 17,873 grandparents in Kansas who were responsible for their grandchildren. Many of these caregivers are living on fixed incomes and are being severely financially stressed when they take on the obligation of raising their grandchildren.

When the parenting of a child is taken over by the grandparents, it is normally due to some negative event in the life of the child's parents. Grandparents can be a point of stability in a child's changing world. They have a special way of giving young people the gift of time and attention and encouragement to develop new skills and talents. Their example of steadfast faith helps younger family members to make appropriate life decisions. Grandparents can even bridge generation gaps before they are made.

Under current law grandparents who are caregivers for their grandchildren are not entitled to receive the same benefits provided to foster parents. Recognizing the benefits of children being raised by family and not by strangers, we support this bill and respectfully request that this committee recommends SB 62 favorable for passage.

Thank you.


Michael P. Farmer
Executive Director

FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS

Date 1-25-06

Attachment 5

MOST REVEREND RONALD M. GILMORE, S.T.L., D.D.
DIOCESE OF DODGE CITY

MOST REVEREND JOSEPH F. NAUMANN, D.D.
Chairman of Board
ARCHDIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS

MOST REVEREND PAUL S. COAKLEY, S.T.L., D.D.
DIOCESE OF SALINA

MOST REVEREND MICHAEL O. JACKELS, S.T.D.
DIOCESE OF WICHITA

MICHAEL P. FARMER
Executive Director

MOST REVEREND JAMES P. KELEHER, S.T.D.
ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS - ARCHDIOCESE OF K.C. IN KS

MOST REVEREND EUGENE J. GERBER, S.T.L., D.D.
BISHOP EMERITUS - DIOCESE OF WICHITA

MOST REVEREND GEORGE K. FITZSIMONS, D.D.
BISHOP EMERITUS - DIOCESE OF SALINA

MOST REVEREND MARION F. FORST, D.D.
RETIRED

GRANDPARENTS AND OTHER RELATIVES RAISING CHILDREN

B.J. Gore, M.S.

Parents Helping Parents and Kinship Navigator Programs Supervisor

Kansas Children's Service League

***1365 N. Custer
Wichita, KS 67203***

(316) 942-4261 Ext. 1315

Across the United States, there are more than six million children being raised by grandparents or other relatives. According to the 2000 US Census data in Kansas there are approximately 18,000 grandparents who are responsible for the care of their grandchildren. These grandparents have become the primary caregivers for the children whose parents cannot or will not care for them due to mental health, death, hardships and other family matters. There are benefits for the child who is being raised by grandparents or kin. J.D. Berrick in his article *When children cannot remain home: Foster family care and kinship care (1998)* states "Kinship care can provide continuity, lessen the trauma of separation, preserve family ties and offer growth and development within the context of a child's culture and community."

Grandparents or other relatives raising children often feel that this was something they had not planned on doing, but were more than willing to step up to the challenge of providing a home and care to the children. AARP State Director Maren Turner states, "a growing number of Kansas grandparents, whether they are retired or working full or part time, have found themselves in situations where there is no other option than to take care of their grandchildren on a full-time basis. In fact, the number of grandparent headed households in Kansas has increased by 43 percent from 1990-2000, according to U.S. census figures." Only 15 states had a higher percentage increase.

For many of the grandparents, "parenting the second time around" can be very challenging and often brings with it barriers that grandparents will have to overcome in raising their grandchild. With the care giving responsibilities that grandparents or relatives have in raising the children, they face other issues including financial, legal, and social -emotional.

From the financial aspect, many grandparents may be retired or living on fixed incomes. The financial cost involved in raising their grandchild can become difficult for the grandparent. Ann Nieuwrenhuis, M.A., County Extension Director, Michigan State University Extension, stated in *Second Time Around – Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, "the cost of raising a child will vary depending on the age of the child and the family's standard of living, but an average has been suggested of \$6,000.00 per year or \$500.00 per month per child". For many grandparents the financial issues can

FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS

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Attachment 6

become very frustrating and worrisome. But, grandparents or kin are more than willing to face this barrier so that the child can stay in their care.

In Kansas, currently there is a resource that is available for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. Through Kansas Social and Rehabilitation Services, grandparents or relatives raising children can be eligible to receive TANF benefits through the Successful Families Program. The eligibility requirements to participate are based solely on the income of the child being raised in the home. The grandparents' income is not taken into account. Through the program, the grandparent or relative receives a monthly income and a medical card for the child in their care. Through TANF, the monthly financial benefit for the family of grandparents/kin raising children is \$175 for one child and \$271 for two children.

Senate Bill 62- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren is a bill presented to the legislature by the Kansas Silver Haired Legislature. The proposed program would offer greater cash assistance to grandparents raising their grandchildren along with greater connection to appropriate services and support. Through SRS and other service agencies, there would be the potential of keeping these high-risk families out of the Kansas foster care system.

Kansas Children's Service League, a private not for profit agency, has been dedicated to meeting the changing needs of children and families in Kansas since 1893. Our agency values providing quality services and support to the families we serve. We view the role of the grandparent or relative who is raising children as a wonderful resource in the care and upbringing of the child.

In meeting the needs of grandparents and other relatives raising children, Kansas Children's Service League offers two programs that provide support and services to these families. The programs are the Parents Helping Parents and Grandparents/Kinship Support Group Program and the Kinship Navigator Program.

The Grandparents/Kinship Support Group Program is a statewide program primarily funded by SRS which offers educational information, support and connection to valuable community resources. The program has been in operation for over ten years and has proven to be very successful in meeting the needs of the families who attend. This past year the program has served families in the following counties: Douglass, Butler, Ford, Sedgwick, Shawnee and Harvey. We also have a waiting list for groups to be established.

The Kinship Navigator Program has been modeled to provide support to the kin caregivers in navigating the system in order to provide the best possible care to the children in their care. Kinship caregivers often face a variety of barriers including navigating educational systems, authorizing medical treatment, obtaining affordable legal services and accessing a variety of benefits and services. The Kinship Navigator program has been piloted in Sedgwick County very successfully. The program which is funded by seed money through Children's Alliance has the goal to serve these families prior to any SRS involvement. The program has been built on research based practice using a strengths model of case management and utilizes the AAPI Testing Model which looks at

various indicators regarding the capacity of parenting. Since August 2005, the program has served over 15 families and currently has a waiting list for services.

We greatly encourage you to pass this very important piece of legislation for the welfare of these very special families. It is extremely important that Kansas offer programs which will provide these families with the support to secure appropriate resources and the support they need to remain strong and healthy.

Now I would like to introduce to you three of the beneficiaries of our programs. Each is a grandparent raising grandchildren in three different Kansas counties: Susie Lindsey, Katherine Turner and Brenda Arrera.

Good afternoon Chairman Edmonds and Committee:

My name is Kim Strunk and this is my husband Danny, daughter Katelynne and granddaughters Juliana and Mayli. We are coming before you today to ask you to support SB 62 with the Supplemental note changes.

I'd like to tell just a little about my family. Some of you are familiar with my face and name here around the Capitol. I am employed by the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities, today though I am here as Juliana and Mayli's grandma also known as Mam-maw. Juliana and Mayli's mother, Kaci, has some serious drug and mental health issues and still today chooses to live house to house and even motel to motel, pending on who's footing the bill, and we don't even ask who's paying for that. Since October 2004, we have been the sole caregivers/providers for these two little girls. Mayli has never lived anywhere but with us since she was born, and until August had slept no where except in our bedroom. Juliana has only lived 6 months of her life away from our home. Juliana and Mayli are not placed in our home and care by SRS but by parents who stood up to their mother and said you will not raise our grandchildren by the means that you are now choosing to live your life. You do not have a job, a vehicle or reliable mode of transportation and you do not have a home...and until you can provide these 3 things along with getting drug counseling and mental health care, Juliana and Mayli will live with us. That was in October 2004 and the girls are still with us and their mother has been arrested 4 times and is now on probation. She says she is seeking drug counseling and some services from Mental Health, yet her probation officer believes that she is far from being able or ready to take on the care of the girls. He agrees totally that Juliana and Mayli are in a safer and healthier environment than either one of their parents can provide at this time.

We have run up against a few obstacles since we have taken over care of the girls.

- 1) Day Care, anywhere from \$800 to \$1200 per month for both girls. For now, Danny is staying home being Mr. Grandma!!!
- 2) Medical Insurance, for now Kaci has kept the girls medical cards up to date which is good. Without "legal" custody of the girls, even though they live with us and we are the sole providers for them, I cannot add them to my insurance policy. (Must be a "legal" guardian). IF they get sick and the Dr. request the mother's ok, we will just have to tell them we don't know how to find her and hopefully they will go ahead and treat. So far we have kept them healthy.
- 3) Legal costs to establish Guardianship...IF I had chosen to leave the girls with Kaci and wait for SRS, to step in after many reports of neglect, abuse and exploitation the state would have paid for this then. We did not go that legal gambit, call me silly, but I still have hope that someday Kaci will "grow-up" and step up to the plate and be the mom that she suppose to be. Until then, if and when the day comes that we have to establish guardianship, I hope I can find the help reasonably cheap!!!

We are just one family of many thousand Kansans that are raising their grandchildren today. As we are not to the age that SB62 supplement has lowered too, and far from the age of 60 stated in SB62. We are hoping that by bringing these needs to you today that in the next year or two we will be able to get some help.

When I first started working on this bill I told the Senate that my husband and I were just starting to see the light at end of the child rearing years tunnel with Katelynne being our baby, and we have raised three other children. Then not two weeks after giving that testimony we come to find out that light at the end of the tunnel was not the a light but a whole new train named Juliana and Mayli!!!

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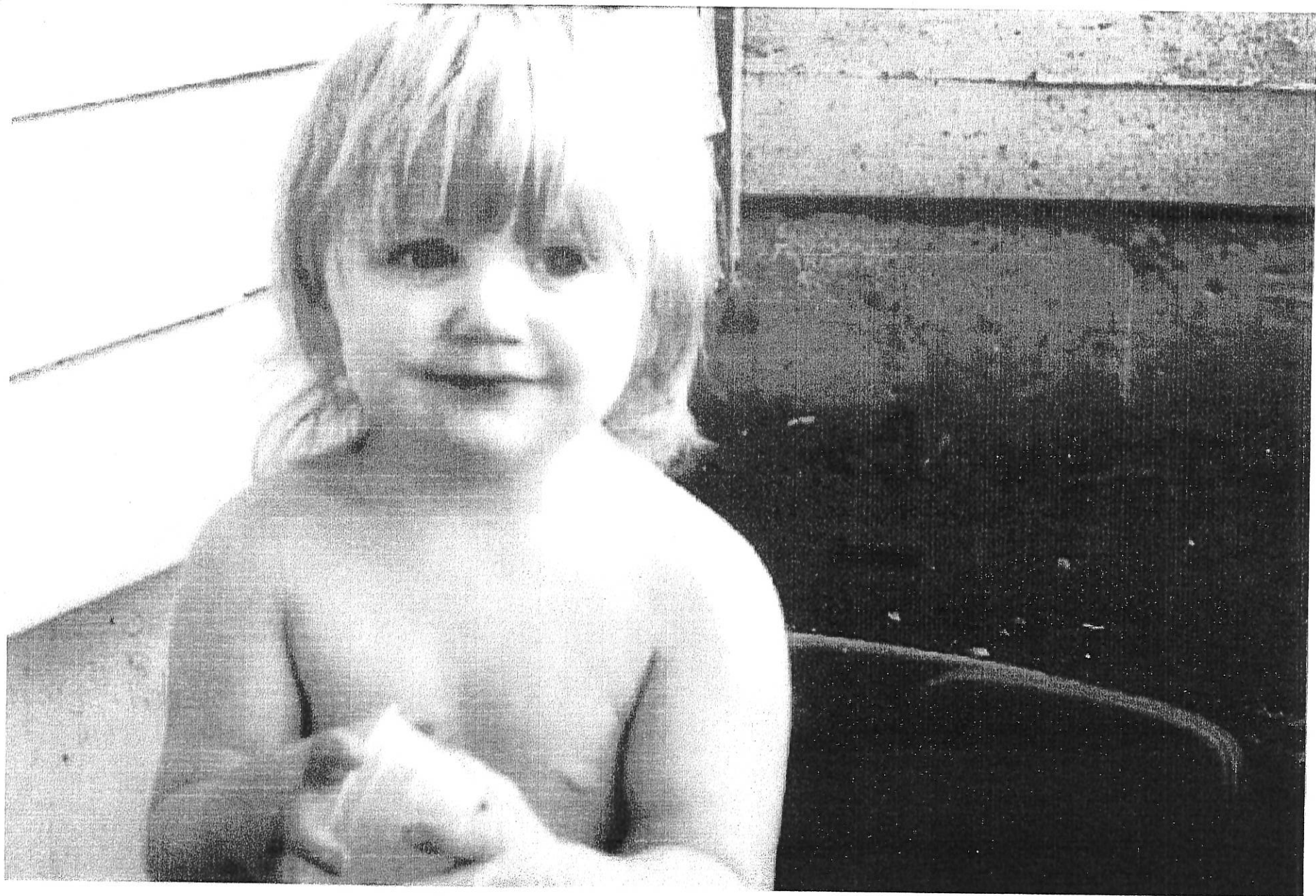
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I thank you for hearing from me today and I will be glad to stand for any questions.

Sincerely,

Kim Strunk & family
6928 Crestwood Dr.
Topeka, KS 66619
785-608-8770



Mayli - playing in her favorite spot.



Juliana
being herself...

Grandparents and Relatives Raising Children

Brenda Arrera, age 51
Augusta, KS

My name is Brenda Arrera and I am a grandparent raising grandchildren in Augusta, Kansas. My story began in February of 2003. Social and Rehabilitative Services temporarily placed my grandchildren, then ages four months and two and on-half years old, in my home. The children were returned to the mother after approximately one month. By May 2003 my husband and I were providing for both the children and their mother, contingent on the mother's completion of in-house drug treatment. My son, the children's father was in jail. By August 2000 the children's mother had been kicked out of drug rehabilitation and immediately, voluntarily relinquished her parental rights. My husband and I assumed the total responsibility of two little girls, then ages nine months and three years old. I was assured by other family members that assistance would be forthcoming. That is not how it worked out.

I will share with you some of the bumps and scrapes that I am enduring as a result of becoming a surrogate parent. I had owned my own business for ten years and was equipped to deal with the stress and time constraints of self-employment. That would soon change; many things would soon change! Because of my conviction to provide my grandchildren with a lovingly consistent and stable home and the overwhelming fear of losing my grandchildren to a system that may separate them with little regard to family history of involvement, I made a decision about my future that could be considered adverse on economic, social and marital levels. I became an employee rather than an employer. This allowed me more time to rear my grandchildren and still provide an income although significantly less that I was accustomed to.

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In addition, because of my decision to “step up to the plate” with my grandchildren, I went from being married to single, eliminating spousal income. My financial life changed dramatically.

It is a fact, not all grandparents embrace the life-changing obligation to raise grandchildren. But, for those of us that do, the rewards are life-changing. The grace of God, the direction of organizations such as the Kansas Children’s Service League with their support group and “Kinship Navigator” programs, and the generosity of good friends allowed me to give my grandchildren what all children should take for granted, a close relationship with a consistent family caregiver. I feel blessed that God has given me the strength to endure the financial stress of my compromised situation and still provide the needs of my grandchildren. Because I made these choices, my grandchildren have each other and all extended family members. I have worked around my grandchildren’s needs, I have found an excellent daycare provider. I have learned to substitute membership at the YMCA (too costly) for a fenced-in backyard, small swimming pool, used swing-set and childproof gardening tools. Long walks and picnics in the park have taken the place of dining out. Entertainment, such as theatre has given way to “Barney”, “Dora”, and “Where the Red Fern Grows”, and “Mary Poppins” to mention a few of our favorites. Church attendance has supplied them a fellowship and interaction with other children in a family worship environment. I have become proficient in using a digital camera for all those special occasion pictures, less expensive than a portrait studio. Now, at fifty-one I live the joy and worry of a “second-time around” parent. No, it has not evolved without a price.

I am not as resilient as in my youth; I am not at the “top of my game” in earning ability. I am employed and working approximately forty-seven hours weekly. I do not have the privilege of time alone to rest or read leisurely or talk on the phone, but my grandchildren name everyone in their family, enjoy our Christmas tradition, and old family photos have introduced them to

their ancestry and they know where they belong. I believe that ideally children should be reared by their parents but in situations when that is not possible the next best resolve is with the grandparent. Connection with family is key in the development of our grandchildren. I am of the mindset that grandparents can provide this connection and help our grandchildren grow to become established, grounded individuals, strong in self-worth, and family value. I simply ask you what greater investment and contribution to our grandchildren's future can we as grandparents, people, and government make than to recognize the strength of this alternative parenting resource and to support it with economic and organizational assistance?

Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

Susie Lindsey, age 54
Newton, Kansas
Harvey Co.

My name is Susie Lindsey and I am a grandparent raising a grandchild. I reside in Newton, Kansas, Harvey County and I am 54 years old. I have permanent guardianship of my granddaughter, Alexis. She came to live with me when she was 14 months old. She is now 7 years old.

Her parents were young and involved with drugs. So being responsible parents were not important to them. I received a call from SRS in Sedgwick County stating both parents had tested positive for drugs and if I didn't assume custody of Alexis, she would go into foster care. Her parents decided it was easier to leave the state than to comply with court orders to regain custody. Their rights were severed in 2001.

My concerns are for the future. I'm not able to put much money away for my retirement. As for Alexis, I'm not able to put money away for her college fund. We are getting by but prices are going up so it's getting harder. Alexis enjoys gymnastics and swimming. She is active and healthy and deserves a good life.

Because I am working, we do not qualify for food stamps and because she is 7 years old, she no longer qualifies for wick. Through SRS I receive TANF daycare and a medical card. Also, Alexis has ADHD and her medications are very costly. So without the TANF benefits I would not have been able to taken custody of her.

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Grandparents and Relatives Raising Children

Katherine Turner, age 53
Wichita, Kansas

My name is Katherine Turner. I am from Wichita. A few years ago I was a single grandparent living alone working extra hours only if I wanted to. I had raised my children and was ready for a slower pace. Never in a million years would I have thought I would end up parenting again. I am now a grandparent raising grandchildren.

It started in 2004 when I got my then 14 year-old grandson from North Carolina. His mother had given 3 other siblings and him up because of her drug and alcohol addictions. I wanted to help. When he came to live with me in Kansas it took everything I had saved and worked for to take care of him.

Shelter, food and clothes were the most expensive. When I lived alone I had a small apartment but I had to move to a bigger apartment which meant higher rent. I bought food I did not have to buy when I was living alone. Three meals a day for a growing, teenage boy was a big change. His fast growth meant I also had to buy clothes often. Add in important educational costs like schools supplies and paying for sports and activities. It was a hard year with little help. The state said I made too much for most programs and I didn't have family members to assist me.

One year later I took custody of his 2 siblings, 8 and 11 years of age. I was really in for a surprise. The transition from one child to three children was and is at times very difficult. Some days are better than others. Getting up in the early morning taking children different directions to school starts the day and continues at that pace until bedtime. The financial stress has greatly increased. The extra children mean I need more food, more clothing, more activities, and more money I don't have to keep the family running. I have to work overtime now just to make enough

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money to have food for the week. That gets low at times but we make it by cutting other areas. The old saying, "Rob Peter to Pay Paul"-that is how it is in my home. A home that is too small for the four us, a 2 bedroom apartment. There is simply not enough money to do the things I would like to do with my family. No extras.

I pray for a job that will give me daytime hours, not in the evenings like I have now. I have been with my job for 17 years. I am thankful for my job because so many don't have one but the hours don't fit my schedule for raising a family by myself. I am still young and still young at heart but sometimes the routine of raising three grandchildren ages 8-15 creates lots of stress.

Sometimes it is tough. For a long time I had no one to talk to until I was told about the Kinship Support Group which lets me gather with other relatives going through the same things I am. The Kinship Navigator Programs is an inspiration also. Some days I feel like pulling my hair out but these connections help.

This is not the beginning or the end. When I get up in the mornings I think to myself I have 3 children I have to raise until they get 18 or older. Three children I want to make a life for because they had no choice when their parent gave them up and told them they had to leave. I took that choice that they had no control over and I am doing my best to give them a life they deserve.

Testimony

Good afternoon, my name is Alma Smith. I have 4 grandchildren that I have been taking care of for a few years by myself. My grandchildren ages are 9, 7, 4, and 3. Their parents were both incarcerated. Sometimes it has been a struggle both physically and financially to take care of all of their needs. I have had a stroke and bypass surgery. I receive social security, so I am on a fixed income, which was hard for 1, but now I must provide for 4 growing children. The bare essentials are all I am able to provide, and I do mean bare!

Utilities are very expensive especially gas this winter. Everything seems to increase but my check.

Medicaid is cutting back for their medical care. My grandson has Eczema and his medical card does not cover his medication. I continue to shop as frugally as possible but I can't keep up let alone catch up. But we keep going with God's grace.

Please consider me and all the grandparents that have taken on this task of rearing their grandchildren when you are voting on Bill number 62.

We are definitely counting on You!

Alma Smith
Kansas City, Kansas

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Good afternoon my name is Bessie Barnes and I am a grandmother raising my 2 grandsons. My grandsons are 8 and 9 years old. I have had the youngest for 5 years and the other for 2 years now. They are your typical active boys, and that can be quite challenging for a grandmother when you occupy the position on a full time basis. I have my sons' child while he serves in military. He has served 2 tours in the Middle East. My other grandson is my daughter's child and with her health she is not able to care for him at this time.

This is not how I planned for my retirement. The challenges of extra expenses can be overwhelming. The food, clothing, medical expenses are items that were never foreseen when I planned my retirement. And I am sure I am one of the more fortunate grandparents.

Just as I have stepped to the plate for my grandchildren, as my son has stepped to the plate to serve his country. I challenge you also to step to the plate and pass Bill 62.

For all of the grandparents that are raising their grandchildren this your opportunity you to step to the plate for us.

Bessie Barnes
Kansas City, KS

My name is Leann Hochstetler. My husband, Chuck, and I raised our now 7 year old grand daughter for five years, until she was returned to her mother and step-father this last August. In spite of their patterns of alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, domestic violence and my daughter giving up three children earlier, the judge deemed her now "stable" lifestyle gave her the right to tear apart her child's stability over the past five years.

In order to protect our granddaughter from constant upheaval and to be legally and financially responsible for her, we had pursued guardianship at a cost of about \$1500. After almost 3 years I found out just by happenstance, that as grandparents raising (plus having guardianship) of a grandchild, we could apply for cash assistance through SRS. This also made our granddaughter eligible for Medicaid. Our cash assistance was \$175 a month. That was for food, clothing, medical, etc. diapers or pull-ups cost about \$12 per pack, shopping mostly at garage sales and thrift stores still ran up about \$50 a month for coats, shoes, non-prescription drugs, (because of many colds and allergies were \$5 - \$10 a month), etc. Therapy for our granddaughter was \$25 a week.

We are much more fortunate than most grandparents. Many grandparents are single, older women, trying to live on social security. Many have grandchildren with special physical or emotional needs. Many are raising more than one grandchild. Because of the apprehension of getting into the system, many grandparents are trying to pay for daycare, because they are forced to work. Daycare can cost \$150 a week per child.

When my daughter decided to take us to court to regain custody of her daughter it cost up over \$4000. Because the law is more about protecting parental rights than children's emotional and physical well being, we lost the case. Why does the government think grandparents raising grandchildren do not need as much financial help as foster parents? Grandparents are willing to sacrifice their senior lives to raise and protect their loved ones, they will do anything to keep heir babies from being shuffled from home to home & being raised by strangers. Shouldn't our government be willing to help the grandparents raise emotionally well-adjusted children to be adults who will be capable, responsible and able to love because they were so loved?

Thank You,

Leann & Chuck Hochstetler
3600 W 47th Place
Roeland Park, Kansas 66205

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I am a 55-year-old single Grand Parent raising a 9-year-old Grandson. I set goals and dreams for my life. I planned for retirement, and set aside finances to help me enjoy my retirement and do all the things with my Grandchildren that I always wanted to. And instantly my plans, my goals my dreams have all been altered. My finances have been drastically reduced and my savings has been depleted. Instead of being Grandma I am now a Mother and a Father. My grandson was left without parental supervision and nothing to eat for days. I went and picked him up to give him love, food, shelter, clothes, open arms and a shoulder to cry on, thinking everything was going to be alright. After three years, I began to realize I needed some help. I heard about Children's Mercy Family Friends, Grandparents, Foster Parents, Kaw Valley and SRS just to name a few of the programs I thought would be able to help us. I spent about 8 hours a day for two days dialing numbers to get transferred to another number. It seemed as if nobody understood my needs and my pain. When I did reach someone that would listen to my needs they would quickly tell me they didn't know of any agency that could help me, but if I had let my grandson stay in the home where he was and called the State and let the State pick him up they didn't do that the only resources available are \$175 dollars a month from SRS and a month from SRS and Food Stamps. It seems to me that Grandparents raising Grandchildren is more prevalent now than ever. We need help!!!!!!!!!!!!!! The needs of our Grandchildren demand more from and of us than those of our own children. Not to mention our income earning years are diminishing. It seems as if we are being penalized for caring and trying to make a difference for our Grandchildren. The cost associated with raising Grandchildren are greater than those incurred raising our children. The cost of one

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school uniform is \$30 x 5 days = \$150, or at the least \$90 for 3 sets of clothes. The uniforms have to be replaced every three months because the children are growing so fast \$35 dollars for shoes, which have to be replaced every three months also. Under shirts and underwear \$9.99 for a package of 3 undershirts and \$9.99 for a pack gage of 3 underwear. Those also have to be replaced every 3 months. A coat for \$45-\$50 and socks 6 pair \$9.99.

Not to mention the extra cost on our utility bills. My utilities went from \$112 a month to \$300 a month. I didn't mention the church clothes which is a couple hundred (\$200) more a year. The cost associated with school, to play an instrument is \$70-\$80 but I can't afford to let him do that. He wants to play football at school but the cost is \$300-\$400 per season which I can't afford. There are so many positive things our grandchildren would like to be involved in but we can't afford it. When I hear the statement, our children are our it future, makes me shutter to think about it. If the laws are not changed to help the Grandparents raise their Grandchildren to be productive citizens in society, what kind of future will we have?

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation,

Cheryl Collier
Kansas City, KS

MY TESTIMONY ON BEING
A *SINGLE*-GRANDPARENT RAISING
A GRANDCHILD

My name is Kathy and I have had legal custody of my oldest granddaughter since 1999. My granddaughter was 3 at the time I gained custody of her, but had been in the home since birth as my oldest daughter was only 16 when she was born. So basically I've had to provide care for her both physically and financially since even before she was born. I had to take my daughter for her prenatal doctor appointments, purchase the needed baby items such as bed, clothes, diapers, bottles, etc. needed before and after she was born.

My daughter was the oldest of four of my own children that I was raising as a single-parent since 1986. Being a single parent had been a terrible struggle in itself with trying to make financial ends meet, work obligations, providing for and being involved in all four kids' educational needs, and carrying out the domestic needs of the home. At the time of finding out I was expecting a grandchild in 1995; I had also just started furthering my own education at a local Vo-Tech school.

In 1995, when my daughter became pregnant, she had also been getting involved with a not so desirable crowd of friends and started abusing alcohol and drugs. This was also an added strain on the family and me as I quickly sought out help and took her to a treatment program for counseling for several months.

About a year after my granddaughter was born, my daughter left home with the baby and proceeded to stay here and there with her friends. During this time I was able to gain temporary custody of my granddaughter because of the instability and environment my daughter was providing for her. The judge did give custody back to her, but after a short time my granddaughter was taken again and put in a foster home. I didn't have the financial resources at this time to be able to fight for custody as I would have taken her instead of putting her in a family of strangers. My daughter eventually gained custody back again.

My daughter had finally gotten an apartment and a job by this time

but was having trouble with transportation and daycare issues due to her job. I helped her out by taking and picking up my granddaughter to daycare during the week. Then on a Friday in June of 1999, my daughter *did not* pick up her baby from daycare. I was good friends with the daycare owner and had called her that Friday night to see if my daughter had made it by ok to pick up my granddaughter, only to find out she had not. So I picked her up and proceeded to try and locate my daughter to find out what happened. Evidently my daughter had quit her job, picked up and left, and we did not hear from her for 6 months. This was quite devastating to me; I had no idea where else to look, I did not have the finances or the time due to my job to spend countless hours out looking for her. I reported her as a missing person to the authorities in hopes of locating her soon after.

I sought help/advice from child protective services in my area at that time on what to do. They suggested for me to contact an attorney and seek legal custody. I called legal aid and other recourses but ended up having to contact a lawyer on my own at a cost of around \$700 to just gain legal guardianship.

My granddaughter was 3 by this time. I have provided for her care since this time, she will be 10 years old this April. The financial struggle has been tough with getting my three remaining children raised along with my granddaughter. All four of my kids have fortunately graduated high school, my oldest son is about to finish his college education, and I have struggled the past 7 years in continuing my own education with trying to complete as Associates degree. Maybe in a couple more years I will achieve that goal and will continue on for a college Bachelors degree to better myself as well as my income potential.

Although it has been a tremendous struggle and a financial drain, I would not want to be without my granddaughter. Within the past 6 months I personally have had some health concerns arise, this has also put an additional strain on my finances and employability. But it has been a blessing to have my granddaughter there to help out when I've needed it now that all my own kids are grown and out of the home. She has always been a direct part of the family and I cannot fathom what life would be like without her.



My name is Cindy Edwards. I live in Kansas City, Kansas. I am 45 years old and have spent the last 9 years raising my 2 grandchildren born by my middle daughter. She just recently brought a beautiful little girl into this world 5 months ago, All 3 are beautiful children and, like any grandparent, I love them dearly and would protect them until the end. In our case, was called upon by my conscience and by circumstance to take on the caring, the rearing, the providing, the nurturing and loving for these children from the get-go. My daughter was and still is unable to care for them like a mom should. My daughter is one of three wonderful girls. She was a very special child. Everyone that met her would tell me how beautiful and full of life, imagination, and goodness she was. We all expected her life to be a good one. Melissa has struggled with self-esteem and began using drugs and hanging out with other kids using drugs. She had James and Rae in high school, their 10th through 12th grades and developed a meth habit as well. You jut can't imagine what that does to a person and the family. Though I love her so much, these grandchildren are top priority. They totally come first, above all else. She put herself and everyone around her through the wringer but I have remained steadfast in keeping my grand babies from knowing anything about that. They have lived a normal life. They have never known any other home. We have a large involved, loving family, not only in KC but across the country. I have been sole provider, gladly and without thinking twice. It's my duty, my obligation, my heart's desire to take good care of them. I have come to realize that there are so many others like me. I can tell you this country is not serving he grandparents and other family members raising their loved children out of love and concern. We are a growing population with special needs. No one ever mentioned any kind of financial help to me; in fact, it's scary to even discuss for fear of scrutiny and, in some cases, fear of losing these children in an uncaring or callous legal environment. Many and probably most of us would be considered middle to lower class, blue-collar average Americans. There needs to be some compassion and provision, particularly in the legal arena. 3 years ago I sought legal guardianship of my grandchildren. I would up paying a lawyer almost \$1000 for temporary guardianship and was quoted \$1200 for a home study and there was a second lawyer for the kids. I recently received a letter from probate court (3 years later) and am now in the process of adopting all 3 of my grandchildren as suggested by the judge. This will cost me \$1200 and any extra fees for the lawyer; the home study will cost \$600. We are in the beginning phase of this process. This court involvement is like handing my babies to strangers, having to ask for them back and hoping to get them. Can we make this delicate, important bittersweet family process a little less intimidating and more accessible? Many grandmas in my shoes are not coming forward out of lack of trust and financial hardship. Please keep our

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noble, courageous, and selfless struggle as grandparents and families raising these children - please keep us close to your hearts. We need our government to stand with us and for us. Help us be spared such excessive legal costs. Help should be available to care for these kids on a practical level. This is an important social issue with far-reaching consequences in the future.

Thank you and God Bless America.

Sincerely,
Cindy Edwards
Kansas City Kansas

Good afternoon, I am Erie Kennedy; I am a resident of Wyandotte County. My grandchildren came to live with me in 2003. I have 2 boys 8 and 9, 2 girls 2 and 3 years old. The boys came first, when the girls came my mother who I was also caring for had to be relocated. My home could not accommodate everyone.

My expenses have tripled since 2003. I am a working grandmother that cannot afford to be sick. That does not mean that I don't get sick. It means that if I am sick, have a broken arm or leg I must be on the job. Before the children came I had a comfortable lifestyle. I could handle my expenses, repair and general upkeep to my home. My home is in need of repairs that can no longer be included in my tight budget.

My food bill for the month was roughly \$150. It just about tripled with the children. I have compensated by canning vegetables all summer. I have a friend that gives me vegetables from their garden. Without that assistance we could not make it. My salary did not triple. Before I didn't look for handout or hand me downs, now I am looking for everywhere just to feed and clothe my grandchildren. I now must go to food pantries. I have worked all of my adult life and have been self-sufficient so I find no pleasure in not being able to supply the bare necessities of life for my family. I applied for the Leape program last week and my application was rejected because I was a few dollars over their income guideline.

You can help alleviate some of our stress that the grandparents are under by passing Bill 62. I pray that God places it on your heart to consider the grandparent's position and vote yes for Bill 62. Thank you for your time.

Erie Kennedy
Kansas City, KS

Greeting Committee Members,

My name is Catherine Johnson and I am raising 2 of my grandchildren Keevon and K'mya.

The grandparents are here again today in support of Senate Bill No. 62; better known as the Grandparent as Foster Parents Act. First of all, I would like to extend an heartfelt thank you to Senator Vratel.

We are very much in favor of Bill#62. I am currently receiving T.A.N.F. in the amount of \$271 per month for my 2 grandchildren and caring for them is one aspect of grandparenting that I would not change for anything in the world. Most months there are financial strains and often times I cannot afford access to needed services. I work but I have had to take unpaid time away from the job for court appearances, doctor's appointments and visits to my grandson while he was in foster care. When I submitted my application for placement of my grandchildren in my home, I was told that first I had to have reliable transportation, separate furnished rooms because the children are opposite sex and because the Kansas Courts had determined that my grandchildren were special needs children and were at high risk of later on developing either a physical, developmental or emotional disability I had to have a daycare plan in place and be available to take my grandchildren to doctor's appointments, etc. I immediately went about getting things ready even borrowing to get both rooms ready and filled with the basic necessities.

For some people in general the idea of minimal financial and resource support is considered an incentive to taking custody of children needing a home. We have those same needs when we grandparent assume the role of parenting. Resource and financial needs should be available to assist with the transition and continued care for our children too.

Some of the grandparents live on a fixed income just barely meeting the basic needs of everyday living but we sacrifice to see to it that these babies who bring so much love into our lives, keep us young and more conscious of our health are taken care of. We seek assistance for them as step-in parents without a long-term lapse in service.

I have read that one of the amendments was to lower the age requirement. The baby boomers generation is most grateful. I am sure lowering the age to 50 would be an incentive to induce younger grandparents to come forth and step up to take care of their grandchildren.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Catherine Johnson
Kansas City, KS

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MY NAME IS CYNTHIA CRAWFORD. I AM A GRANDMOTHER OF 4 CHILDREN AGES 3,4,7 AND 9, WHO I HAVE HAD LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP OVER SINCE MAY OF 2003. I AM A RESIDENT OF OLATHE, KANSAS. I RECEIVE ASSISTANCE FROM SRS AND FOOD STAMPS BUT THE AMOUNT GRANTED TO ME IS JUST NOT ENOUGH TO TAKE CARE OF 4 CHILDREN. I RECEIVE \$177 AND WAS JUST TOLD LAST WEEK THAT THEY WILL BE TAKING \$11 AWAY FROM ME NEXT MONTH. I AM DISABLED AND, I RECEIVE DISABILITY. I HAVE LOWERED MY STANDARD OF LIVING TO ACCOMODATE THE WELFARE OF MY GRANDCHILDREN. I AM BARELY MAKING IT. I HAVE TO BUY CLOTHES, SHOES AND PAY FOR EVERYTHING CONCERNING SCHOOL AS WELL AS PAYING FOR MEDICAL CARE THAT SRS DOES NOT COVER. MY GRANDAUGHTER LOST ALL OF HER HAIR WHEN SHE WAS RETURNED TO HER MOTHER FROM THE FIRST TIME I TOOK CARE OF THE KIDS. THE SPECIALIST I HAD TO TAKE HER TO DID NOT ACCEPT A MEDICAL CARD SO I HAD TO PAY IT TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF HER HAIR LOSS. MY GRANDSON RECEIVED OVER 20 SPIDER BITES STAYING WITH HIS MOTHER AND HE HAD SO MUCH POISON IN HIS SYSTEM THE DOCTORS HAD THREATEN TO GO TO CHILD PROTECTION IF HE GOT ANOTHER BITE. THESE KIDS WERE BEING NEGLECTED. I COULD NOT SAT BACK AND WAIT FOR SOMETHING ELSE TO HAPPEN. THE ENVIRONMENT WAS NOT SAFE FOR THE KIDS. THEIR FATHER WAS INTO DRUGS AND THE STREET LIFE AND SOMETIMES HE BROUGHT THE STREETS HOME. I KNOW I AM DOING THE RIGHT THING AND THAT THE KIDS NEEDED TO BE IN A SAFE ENVIORMENT. SOMETHING THEIR PARENTS WERE NOT WILLING TO PROVIDE. BUT I AM VERY CONCERNED BECAUSE WE ARE STRUGGLING VERY HARD FROM MONTH TO MONTH AND IT'S NOT FAIR TO THEM OR ME. I NOW HAVE A CAR PAYMENT TO MAKE, WHICH I NEED TO GET THEM BACK AND FORTH TO SCHOOL AND TO THE DOCTOR. MY SMALLER CAR WAS PAID FOR BUT WOULD NOT ACCOMMODATE ALL OF THE CHILDREN WITH CAR SEATS. OF COURSE THERE IS NO ROOM IN THE BUDGET FOR EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES. IN MY HOUSEHOLD WE ARE SELF- ENTERTAINED. THEY WANT TO DO OTHER THINGS LIKE OTHER CHILDREN, GO TO THE MOVIES OR RENT MOVIES, HAVE CLOTHING THAT WAS THEIR'S FIRST, IS A LUXURY WE CANNOT AFFORD. ALONG WITH THE OTHER BILLS I HAVE AND HAD BEFORE I GOT THE KIDS, SRS IS NOT LOOKING AT MY EXPENSES, ONLY MY INCOME. SO I DON'T RECEIVE ENOUGH ASSISTANCE TO REALLY HELP ME TAKE CARE OF THE KIDS. I DO WITHOUT A LOT SO THE KIDS CAN HAVE AND WE ARE REALLY SUFFERING. THAT IS WHY BIIL 62 IS SO VERY IMPORTANT TO ALL GRANPARENTS RAISING THEIR GRANDCHILDREN. THERE ARE THINGS I NEED TO TAKE CARE OF AND DEBTS I NEED TO PAY AND I CAN'T BECAUSE MY BUDGET NO LONGER IS JUST SUPPORTING MYSELF. I LOVE MY GRANDKIDS JUST AS YOU (I AM SURE) LOVE YOURS AND I WOULDN'T WANT TO LET THE STATE OR ANYONE ELSE TAKE CARE OF THEM. I JUST DON'T KNOW WHY WE HAVE TO SUFFER AND DO WITHOUT WHEN ALL I AM DOING IS TRYING TO HELP PROVIDE FOR NEEDY CHILDREN WHO JUST NEED SOMEONE WHO CARES. I CARE AND I HAVE MUCH LOVE FOR THEM, BUT LOVE WILL NOT KEEP THE LIGHTS ON, LOVE DOESN'T KEEP THE HOUSE WARM OR FOOD ON THE TABLE, SHOES ON THEIR FEET AND CLOTHES ON THEIR BACKS. WE ARE TALKING ABOUT FOUR LITTLE PEOPLE. I DON'T KNOW HOW WE HAVE MADE IT

FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS

Attachment 19

Date 1-26-06

THIS FAR. ONLY BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND HAVING HIS MERCY UPON US IS THE ONLY EXPLANATION I CAN GIVE. BUT
IF THERE IS SOMETHING YOU CAN DO TO HELP MAKE LIVING EASIER I WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT.
GOD IS GOOD ALL THE TIME CAUSE I HAVE NEVER SEEN THE RIGHTEOUS FORSAKEN OR BEGGING FOR BREAD. IT HAS
NEVER CAME TO THAT, BUT MANY A TIMES IT LOOKED MIGHTY SCARCE TO US. SO PLEASE HELP THE GRANDMOTHERS
KEEP THE CHILDREN TOGETHER IN LOVE FOR WE ARE ALL THEY HAVE. I NEED THEM TO BE TOGETHER JUST AS MUCH
AS THEY NEED ME TO KEEP THEM TOGETHER. PLEASE HELP US!!

CYNTHIA CRAWFORD
OLATHE, KANSAS

Frank Smith
390 S.E. 110 Ave.
Bluff City, KS 67018-7630
(620) 967-4616
fsmith@kanokla.net
January 25, 2006

Dear House State and Federal Affairs Committee Members,

I would like to offer my support for **SB62**.

I am a long-retired Alaska state child protection social worker. In the course of my employment, I had to place many children of parents who were unable to properly care for them. This was often due to abuse, neglect, illness, absence or because parents or caretakers were even deceased.

Because I worked mainly with Indian and Eskimo children, subjects of the Indian Child Welfare Act, there was a legal directive to make placements within a specific order of preference: family, tribe, ethnicity, and finally, with non-Native families, if no other appropriate placement could be had. I followed that act scrupulously. I was apparently somewhat unique in my rate of placement in accordance with the act, because I established close working relationships with the tribes whose children I serviced.

What I discovered was that placements with family substantially lessened the costs of custody to the state, with far better outcomes.

Children were more comfortable in familiar settings. It reduced the trauma experienced when they were separated from their caretakers, because relatives and even tribes were more familiar to them. It meant they were usually able to stay in the same schools, the same churches, with the same friends and environment. Sometimes, it even meant that they were in bilingual homes that were impossible to find outside the tribe. Customs were honored in their temporary or permanent placements.

The outcomes of these placements were almost universally successful. I was able to work closely with the cooperative caretakers who were almost always blood relatives of the parents for the best outcome for parents in need of services. Because relatives and ICWA were involved, I was sometimes able to give waivers for homes that were culturally acceptable for foster care, but did not meet standards that were demanded of regular licensed foster homes. I made placements of many difficult children who might have been expected to fail in typically more than a dozen non-relative, non-tribal homes.

Many of these placements became quickly successful permanent adoptive or guardianship homes. Many of these placements I made were with grandparents. After I left state employ, I worked as a court-contracted Guardian ad litem, and I did adoption studies.

FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS

Attachment 20

Date 1-26-06

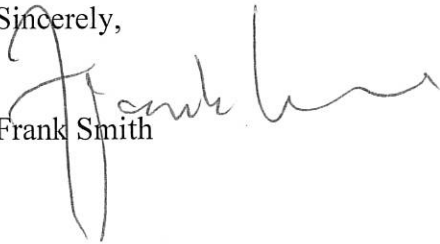
Grandparent placements that I facilitated, either by doing the studies or by representing the best interests of the children, were every bit as successful as those I made as a case manager.

By virtue of me making these placements, there were considerable savings to the state. Children who were IV-E eligible came off the state assistance and foster care rolls, and no longer needed Family Services workers and administration to support their care. The Federal Government often took over financial responsibility with adoption subsidies and insured the maintenance of necessary services. Needy children had loving caretakers with a long-term bond to them. They maintained supportive relationships even with the parents from whom they had been removed.

SB 62 will make similar options available to Kansas social workers. I hope this legislation is quickly approved, engrossed and signed by the Governor.

Sincerely,

Frank Smith

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Frank Smith", written in black ink. The signature is positioned to the right of the printed name "Frank Smith".

My Testimony

I stand here before you today, a grandparent thrust into the role of a parent. I really was not aware of the vast number of grandparents that have assumed the roles of parent until I assumed the role myself. My role began six years ago with a 5-month-old infant boy and a 7-year-old girl, who are now 7 and 14. It was to be a temporary situation until their mother could "get on her feet." Drugs, prostitution, lack of responsibility, lack of education, illness, low self esteem, no self esteem and no self respect I imagine are many other reasons for this role being taken on.

Whatever the reason, it is a harsh fact many, if not all are placed in a very difficult position. Financial hardships and burdens, as well as mental stress and anguish are part of the role. Many are on fixed incomes. If it weren't for grandparents, there would be little or no hope for these children.

These innocent little people who are victims of their circumstances require a lot. Not just the basics, food clothing and shelter. They deserve to be loved and nurtured. There needs to be more resources available to the grandparent's not just financial support, but other support services. Parenting skills need polishing, counseling services should be available for both the grandparents and child or children. I am probably one of the more fortunate and blessed grandparents in many ways, but have come in contact with so many who need so much.

So, today, I speak for them as well, and ask that you consider Senate Bill #62. The passing of this Bill would make available many resources essential to "Grandparents."

Phyllis Smith
Kansas City, Kansas

Candace A. Nelson, Director
Guard Our Grandchildren (G.O.G.)
5508 W. 61st St. Mission, KS 66202
(913) 262-2669 or (816) 797-7824

Re: Testimony before the House, Jan. 25, 2006.
Grandparents as Foster Parents Bill

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

There are many issues grandparents must confront when we become the primary care givers for our grandchildren. When these children are removed from their parental homes, not only do we find that our lives change drastically from what we imagined they would be in our later years, but many of us find that the new financial demands placed upon us can become a strain.

Some years ago, my grandson was taken into state custody and placed with me. Because he was in the custody of the state, there were things that were paid for by the state, such as medical needs. But it was I who had the responsibility for everything else, including food, clothing, transportation, entertainment, activity classes, and any other daily costs associated with raising a child - any child.

When given the choice of caring for our grandchildren, or having them raised by strangers, grandparents will choose on the side of our grandchildren every time. I am sure that every grandparent here would agree that we will always provide for these children first, even if it means going without ourselves. We all feel that they have already suffered more emotional trauma than they ever should have, by being subjected to abuse and neglect by their parents. They should certainly never have to face the additional fear and heartbreak of being uprooted from the extended family members whom they love and depend upon, especially when the State's decision to do so is based solely on finances.

This bill offers to subsidize a grandparent's income at a rate of 75% of what the State would pay to a contracted foster parent. The main question I ask here today is what type of budgetary information was used to determine that a stranger should be paid more to care for my grandchild than I should? Did SRS arrive at this percentile because strangers deserve to be paid more to raise my grandchild, or is it because I, as a grandparent, somehow deserve less? Or perhaps the State of Kansas believes that a child who has been abused or neglected, and is then placed with a grandparent, does not have the fundamental right to stay within their own loving family, and be financially provided for at the same time? My belief is that if the State of Kansas really cared about supporting healthy families, they would offer grandparents twice what they give to foster parents, to show that they really want to keep them together.

Grandparents who step up to raise their grandchildren are heroes - maybe not to the State of Kansas, but they certainly are to the children. And they will take on the financial strain in order to provide their grandchildren with a safe, loving home. We all know that it takes many things to raise a child. Among these are love, patience, guidance, and money. All children deserve all of these and more.

I respectfully ask that you support this bill, and rethink the percentage of financial assistance to be given to grandparents, in an effort to insure that these at-risk children are able to realize all the same hopes and dreams as their more fortunate peers. This can only strengthen the families of Kansas.

Thank you.
Candace Nelson

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Attachment 22
Date 1-25-06

Good afternoon my name is Evelyn Brown. I appreciate this opportunity to express the issues of grandparent as parents so on behave of all grandparents thank you for this format. As grandparents many of us are struggling, struggling just to survive. Giving and sharing what little we have just to stay alive.

We have taken on responsibilities that are not necessarily our own, but how can we leave our flesh and blood whom we love to the system. How can we leave them all alone?

We are grandparents who have felt the need to do what we can to nurture, teach, and in some cases retrain our grandchildren as best as we can. Grandparents who have made the decision to be a part of the solution to help our rejected and abandon children that are growing in numbers in this land.

PLEASE SAY YES TO BILL 62!!!

We are parents with children who have fallen from grace.

Parents praying for positive changes in our children and grandparents trying to keep a smile on our hurting grandchildren faces. It is extremely overwhelming when you do not have enough money for food, clothing, shoes, shelter and utilities bills.

And as we struggle from month to month there are moments when there is almost a complete collapse of your heart, mind and will.

PLEASE SAY YES TO BILL 62!!!

You know that you can't give up, you must continue to fight. Some how you believe that with Gods help thing will surely be alright. You look up towards heaven seeking an answer trusting that help is on the way. Hopefully trusting for tomorrow will be a new day. There may be some of you who are grandparents and you don't have to walk in and ware the shoes that we do. But know this, beware for who knows one day this could be you.

TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THIS SENATE COMMITTEE IT IS WITH EXTREME NEED AND DEEP PASSION THAT WE MAKE A REQUEST FOR ALL OF YOU TO COLLECTIVELY VOTE YES ON BILL 62 !!

For in doing so it will help in the survival of the family isn't that what America is all about. Please send this bill through.

Evelyn Brown
Kansas City, KS

Good afternoon everyone my name is Margo Moore, I am a 51- year- old widowed woman with 34 grandchildren, raising 11 grandchildren, blessed with 5 children, 3 of my 5 are raising and supporting their own. The other 2 are not able in their state of being to properly take care of theirs.

I chose to raise my grandchildren and not let them become part of the system. I could have let them be split up and placed into foster care but I feel as though there is a time in our lives to set aside self and think about grandchildren. A lot of people have suggested that it is not my responsibility to raise them. I believe that all children are all of our responsibility as adults. It just happen that I am also accepting the responsibility of raising my own grandchildren. No it is not always easy and in fact it is hardly ever easy life isn't fair. My grandchildren do not have many material things. But they do have a stable environment.

There is always food (it may not be what they want), the utilities are on and they have shelter but foremost they have plenty of love. My prayer is the struggle will prove to be worthy. I just think that it could be better if people understood that by us stepping to the plate we have saved not only our grandchildren but also tax payers.

The cost to raise a child in the system is quite high. All that we ask is for a little assistance for necessities for the children we are raising. I pray that you will consider us when making your decisions in the future.

Margo Moore
Kansas City. KS

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Attachment 24

Date 1-25-06

For a year over a year our daughter and her two infant children lived with us. She didn't have a home of her own and she didn't want to work to support herself or her children. Her boyfriend, the father of her two children, lived from one place to another staying with whoever would let him move in until he wore out his welcome. At one point he was living on the streets of Olathe. He also refused to work to support himself or his children.

Our daughter decided that her boyfriend needed help and was not able or capable to take care of himself. She decided that it was too stressful to take care of her two children, her parents could take care of her children.

In December of 2001 our daughter left to meet her boyfriend. It was about 8:00 P.M., cold, dark and weather was less than favorable. She did not own a car, so she walked to meet him. Her two small children were left with us, they were 2 1/2 months and 18 months old. This happened on a Friday evening. She never returned.

On the following Monday I filled out a missing persons report on our daughter. Meanwhile we were left with two small children to raise and care for. We waited to see if the police were able to find the children's mother. It took almost a month before the police found our daughter or she made any contact with us. It turned out she was living just a couple of blocks from us and she was fine.

We contacted a lawyer the first week of January 2002 to see if we could get guardianship for the two grandchildren. We needed to be able to get medical care, make decisions regarding their welfare and in general take over the parenting role for our grandchildren should the need arise while we had custody of them. Our daughter and her boyfriend signed guardianship papers giving my husband and I guardianship over the two grandchildren.

At the time this all happened, my husband had suffered a second lay off in just over a year. In 2000 I had tried to open my own business. It had only been open about 18 months when my daughter decided to leave her two very small children with my husband and I. My husband and I were trying to use my business to support itself and our lifestyle. The stress of trying to manage a business, our income problems and caring for two small children was overbearing. We gave up the business in September 2002.

My husband continued working odd jobs and I stayed home with the two grandchildren. As a result of the the situation we lost ownership of our home and the only vehicle we had was repossessed. Fortunately we were able to negotiate with the new owner of our house to be able to continue to occupy it. With the help of family and friends and the hard work of my husband we started to make progress.

My husband and I are in our fifties and climbing out of a very serious financial and emotional dilemma. The grandchildren are still living with us and we are now adjusted as to being a family. Both children have gone to preschool and one is in kindergarten now.

At a time when most of our peers are free from the responsibility of taking care of small children and can focus on preparing for their older years, we have started over with a family of small children. My husband and I must now consider once again how our decisions will effect the grandchildren's future.

Children at this age like to run, climb and are very loud and have to be reminded to use their manners. They have to be reminded several times a day about rules. There are days they don't want to go to bed, stay clean, use their manners, be nice to each other, clean up their mess, stay out of things, don't touch and so forth. We now eat at McDonald's and Pizza Hut much more than we care to. If we want to go to a movie we now have to find someone we can trust to watch the grandchildren. When we attend school functions with the grandchildren we are out of place. Most of the parents are in their twenties or early thirties.

Being a parent/grandparent is no easy task. We are caught between three generations, our own, our daughters and our grandchildren. We have the full brunt of the financial and emotional care of children again and we must contain the stress of parenting and the problems of being older.

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Attachment 25

Date 1-25-06

Ray and Ginger Michael
Olathe, Kansas

Below is the letter of Barbara Jolly.

Nearly 4 years ago, I sought and obtained permanent Guardianship of three grandchildren. There was great instability in their family due to the father's drinking problem and mother's mental breakdown. Neither of these two problems have improved so I still have the children.

These years have been difficult at times with dealing with mentally unstable parents and unreliable child support. Their father only worked five months last year so many months the only support I got was the \$60.00 per month that comes from their mother's Social Security Disability.

The one saving grace is Healthwave. Healthwave has provided counseling for the children to help them with their emotional scars. There are also medical issues. With the cost of prescriptions, I could never handle them financially on my own. I am truly grateful to KS Medicaid. If it were not available, these children would be in foster care.

The children are grateful to be in a stable home and they often express their appreciation. That plus seeing them grow up to be fine young people is truly rewarding.

Barbara Jolly

3621 W 50th Terrace

Roeland Park, Kansas 66205

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Attachment 26

Date 1-25-06

This is how my story starts

I was called by my youngest daughter(Sabrina Looney) to come to Indiana to pick up her babies. This was 12-22-02 she said that she had to go to work release program and her husband was not taking care of the babies right--they looked like 2 kids from Ethiopia.(not to put them down but to describe their appearance)-as in under nourished, lice in their hair so bad we had to practically shave their heads. I brought them with nothing but the clothes on their back. The youngest one kept saying all the way to my house "I love you grandma" over and over again. Bethany wouldn't say a word. It was heart breaking. My niece (Rena Hardesty) went with me. My daughter gave me a paper that was notarized-which gave me the authority to get them medical and gave me guardianship of them too until she gets her life back in order.

Well 3 months into this, about March 2003. we were told she had escaped from work release and was being shipped to Rockville, IN. .Where she was incarcerated. We were not told why or when she was to get out. All she said was it could be sometime in December of 2005.

We then tried to get help through SRS and was told they had to base everything on our income. They also told us we couldn't get child care help because we run a home internet business. It is our sole income and it fluctuates from month to month. It has kept us going but we had to give up lots of things and buy everything for them. At the time they were still in diapers.

There should be something set up for all grand parents that have to raise or even just take care of them for any amount of time. Not all grand parents have the money due to set incomes and the needs of the children suffer for this. This should be put as top priority as there has been such a rise in this happening more and more often. It should not matter as much as the needs of the children.

I think that the government should take a good look around as I personally think there is a lot wrong with the way it is set up now! I for one am so angry at the system you have now that I would rather do without than try to understand the way your so-called system works.

It is not only financial aid we need. The stress of having a child around 24-7 is more than any one grand parent should have to endure. Child care for them should be provided as it is such a strain not only on the children. They need to have interaction with other children too. How is it that no one has even looked into this?

Now that one of mine is in school the other is at home with us, as it is outrageous to pay over a hundred dollars a week to have him in day care and not to mention you have to pay even if they are sick. I can't afford this and know of a lot of grand parents that can't afford it either. Most are on fixed incomes and don't have much of anything that they can afford to give up except the love and a place to stay. This is a matter that should be higher up on your lists of things to do then it is now!

Thank you for your time.

Dora Fleming 627 West Wabash Street Olathe, KS 66061

FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS

Attachment 27

Date 1-25-06

Hello, my name is Ms. Webb and I am a grandparent who is having to help my daughter raise her 2 children. I am no longer in the work force. I although, I finding it difficult to stay home any longer. seeing how I've exhausted all of my savings and we are sometimes living off my savings. That is what is left of it. I came to meetings hoping to get help with my old house that we live in. It's older than I am and needs so much done to it.

I realize that without the proper help necessary I won't be able to help my daughter or myself. It takes money to keep older people and their homes in shape. We as grandparents would love to help of children and ourselves with just a little help from those we have helped to put in office.

I'm hoping that you will use your position to help the People of Kansas help themselves.
Thank you for listening.

K. Webb

Good afternoon, my name is Christine Brown and just when I thought I could take off my apron and put on traveling shoes I inherited 2 of my granddaughters ages 4 and 16. Off go the traveling shoes and I was retired now I am semi-retired with my apron back on. I love my granddaughters but this position was not one I took on lightly. I knew the hardships of parenthood. I was a single parent that raised 3 children on my own. I was very disappointed to find that I would not qualify for the assistance needed in raising my grandchildren. To think that strangers can and would receive assistance for keeping the same children if I had allowed them to be raised in the system. It is almost like a punishment because we share the same blood. Please do not punish grandparents for accepting the responsibility to rear our grandchildren. Bill 62 would be greatly appreciated by all of the grandparents that have assumed this role. I am not asking to put my traveling shoes on nor take off my apron or to forsake semi-retirement. I am asking for assistance to raise my grandchildren. Not be stressed because my utilities has doubled and my food bill is higher or keeping them clothed is an unplanned and unprepared expense for my husband and myself. It takes a village to raise children and you are in position and also in my village and if you choose you can make a difference. Being part of this village is a shared responsibility. I will do my part and I am praying that you will do yours and support Bill 62.

Respectfully,

Christine Brown
Kansas City, KS

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Attachment 29

Date 1-25-06

My grandson was born in Dec. 1996; when he was 5 months old his mother asked me to watch him for the evening and didn't come back for a week. When she came back, it was only for a day or two and she left him again, this time for three weeks. I got guardianship that summer for my grandson at a cost of nine hundred dollars. My husband and I both worked. I worked as a waitress in my father's restaurant. I got to bring my grandson to work with me. I was fortunate that I could do that. Most people do not have that privilege. I did check on day care for an infant and that would have been one hundred thirty dollars a week so I didn't do that. I did have to go and buy diapers at ten dollars , formula twenty dollars, wipes three dollars, blankets fifteen dollars, five outfits fifty dollars, little socks three dollars, pacifier two dollars, playpen forty dollars, baby bathtub fifteen dollars, soap, shampoo, lotion, diaper rash ointment fifteen dollars. That was one hundred seventy three dollars that I had to spend that week just so the little guy could eat, bathe, and wear clean clothes for the week. When he became a toddler I had to put him in day care, because he was just too much energy to be running around the cafe. Day care for a toddler was one hundred dollars a week. So to take care of my grandson at age two the cost per month, for food, clothing, shoes, diapers, a few toys, and daycare was about seven hundred a month and that was if he didn't get sick.

My grandson lived with us until he was 3 1/2 years old. Than his mother came back. She was married and wanted her son back. She thought just because she gave birth that he would instantly love her and know her, even though she hadn't seen him since he was around five months old. We went to court to try to adopt him but we lost that battle. That cost us twelve hundred dollars. The court in Wyandotte County just handed him over to her in a matter of two days. My grandson was very traumatized by this. He did not know his mother and did not want to go. After about five months of living with her, his mother could not stand the fact that my grandson still did not like going home with her and decided that he was never going to see us again. He had spent the weekend with us and she came over to get him. She was mad and yelling at us. This scared the little guy and he put his arms out for me to take him. That made her even madder and she put him in his car seat. He was screaming and crying for me. He was kicking and throwing himself around in his seat. He wanted me to rescue him like I had always done in his little life, but I couldn't do anything except watch his little hands reach for me through the window as she pulled out of the driveway. That would have been the last time I saw him, but I hired an attorney. At first I didn't know what to do. I felt like my child had been kidnapped. I raised him. Emotionally he was my child and I was his mother. I think that was the most horrible feeling I had ever had in my life. I could not stop crying. I had to go see the doctor and he put me on Paxil. That helped me a little. I did not see him for a year; court took a year and cost us almost ten thousand dollars. My husband worked over time a lot and we used two years of tax returns to pay the lawyer. My grandson is now nine years old and has a lot of emotional issues that have come from all that has happened over the last five years. Now I'm in court over another grandson. The mother has agreed to give us visitation. There has been no fight, but I did just get a bill for 4999 dollars from a lawyer's office.

So far we have spent in lawyer fees alone almost eighteen thousand dollars just so we could keep seeing our grandsons and so the other children, cousins, half brothers and sisters could see them also. We couldn't afford any of this. We sacrificed a lot to keep

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Date 1-25-06

seeing our grandchildren. We were lucky, my husband and I were young grandparents, both working and able to work overtime. I don't know what we would have done if we were living on a retirement income. Back when my grandson lived with us for three years at a cost of 700 a month that was about 8000 a year. I don't like talking about the money part of it because that number bought me more love than my heart could hold. I got in return little kisses, big hugs, Saturday morning cartoons, wishing on stars, I got more in return for my money than any savings account could give me. I know there are grandparents out there that are struggling to make ends meet while caring for a grandchild. That's why I'm here telling you my story.

Thank You.

Melchorre DeGraeve

Johnson County Kansas

Mr. Chairman and Committee members thank you for the opportunity to present our comments on SB62. I am Irv Hoffmann, President of the Silver Haired Legislature.

We want to thank Secretary of SRS Daniels and his staff for their cooperation and assistance ;Senator Vratil for his work on this bill and the Governor for including funding in her budget.

The original purpose of SB 62, as passed by the Silver Haired Legislature, was to assist grandparents, 60 and older, who were caring for their grandchildren. The poverty level requirement was set at 150% and the reimbursement at 75% of the amount paid by SRS for foster care. Our concerns were directed at those "working poor" who did not meet the qualifications for assistance of other programs. The grandparents, who were making numerous personal sacrifices to ensure that their grandchildren would have the opportunity to grow up in a loving family environment. Many of these grandparents were neglecting to purchase needed medicines or schedule doctor's visits to pay for school expenses and other needs of their grandchildren. We did not address the needs of those who qualified for the many state assistance programs nor those under age 60.

We have identified two sections of concern in the balloon. Section 4. (a) (3), which addresses the poverty level for eligibility and Section 6. (d) which speaks to the ancillary services such as clothing allowance etc.

It is highly probably that any program set at 100% of the poverty level is only going to serve those already in the system. Those at the poverty level have at their disposal several programs such as food stamps, utility bill assistance etc. At 100% of the poverty level a retired grandmother raising a child could have a total income not to exceed \$12,120 or \$1,010 a month. A family of 2 grandparents and 2 children could have a total income not to exceed \$18,400 or \$1,533 a month.

Most people would receive more than this in social security or retirement pensions. Thus, making them ineligible for SB 62, but eligible for TANF.

Last week I spoke before a group of AARP members and asked about their income and expenses. All were at or above 130% of the poverty level. Here's what I learned. Rent or Home expenses \$200-450; Food \$400; Utilities \$400; Prescription Drugs \$30-150; Medical Insurance \$130; Transportation \$125-140. That's over \$1,500 a month.

Yesterday, I spoke to a grandmother who had planned to testify today but the lady she had arranged to work for her was ill. She asked that I relate her story to you.

She is 70 years young and works 5 days a week at a homeless shelter. She is raising 2 granddaughters ages 10 and 14. She has raised them since they were infants. She drives an older car, which is in need of repairs. Her income is at the 130% of poverty level. She pays over \$200 for home expenses; \$400 for utilities; \$30-100 for prescriptions; Medical insurance \$130; Transportation costs \$150; Food \$400. Then there are the school expenses and clothing for the girls, and day care. She manages to scrape up a few dollars each month for dancing lessons.

She did receive child support for one of the girls for a year or two and both children received TANF. However, TANF was terminated after 60 months. She isn't eligible for food stamps, free school lunches, or assistance with her utility bills. She said tell them *there are many programs out there for the poor but nothing for the "working poor" like myself.*

We urge you to amend this bill to raise the poverty level to 130%. If you find that the budget restraints prohibit this amount; then we ask you to consider starting at 110% and raise the amount by 10% each year. At each poverty level according to SRS documents there are only 129 more children eligible at 110% vs. 100% and 387 more children eligible at 130% vs. 100%. Grandchildren being raised by grandparents are approximately 50% of the total at the poverty levels.

Section 6 (d) is our other area of concern. We urge you to change each occurrence of the word "may" to "shall". Grandchildren should receive the same benefits described in this section that are available to children in Foster Care.

If our suggestions are adopted this Bill has an excellent opportunity to provide cost savings to the state. As the poverty level qualification rises and more Grandparents become aware of the financial aid we should see a drop in the number of children in foster care.

Let's work to provide some assistance to the "working poor" and provide for a real family life for our grandchildren. This will be a win situation for children, grandparents, society, and for our state.

Thank you.

I stand for questions.

IRV '92
Bill

Eligibility and Payment Options for Grandparents as Caregivers
Total Monthly Cases Affected by Higher Payments

Minimum Grandparent Age	Monthly Payment	Grandparent Income Limit					
		80% FPL	90% FPL	100% FPL	110% FPL	120% FPL	130% FPL
65	200	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases
	250	333	373	413	441	470	498
	300						
	350	Children	Children	Children	Children	Children	Children
	400	549	615	682	730	777	824
410							
60	200	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases
	250	584	631	697	744	791	838
	300						
	350	Children	Children	Children	Children	Children	Children
	400	928	1,039	1,150	1,229	1,308	1,386
410							
55	200	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases
	250	818	912	1,005	1,071	1,136	1,202
	300						
	350	Children	Children	Children	Children	Children	Children
	400	1,345	1,501	1,657	1,766	1,876	1,986
410							
50	200	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases
	250	1,015	1,125	1,234	1,312	1,389	1,466
	300						
	350	Children	Children	Children	Children	Children	Children
	400	1,668	1,851	2,034	2,163	2,292	2,421
410							
45	200	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases	Cases
	250	1,209	1,335	1,461	1,550	1,639	1,727
	300						
	350	Children	Children	Children	Children	Children	Children
	400	1,982	2,192	2,402	2,550	2,699	2,847
410							