



Summary of the Data-Driven Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Act

On Tuesday, August 2, 2022, Senators Grassley (R-IA) and Hassan (D-NH) introduced [S. 4725](#), which would amend Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act in furtherance of three of CHAMPS’ policy goals: 1) implementation of data-driven foster and adoptive parent recruitment and retention practices, 2) prioritizing placements with family members and other family connections, and 3) engaging foster parents in decision-making

Data-Driven Recruitment and Retention: Current law requires states to develop plans for the diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive parents that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of children in foster care. This provision was added to Title IV-B in 1994 by the Multiethnic Placement Act. Since that time, studies and expert guidance have consistently highlighted the need to utilize data on foster parent and child characteristics to recruit and retain families that match the needs of children in care, and the need to collect feedback from foster parents to inform recruitment and retention practices. The bill addresses both needs as follows:

- In lieu of diligent recruitment plans, it would require the development and implementation of “family partnership plans” that describe how the State plans to use data to establish goals, assess needs, measure progress, reduce unnecessary placements in congregate care, improve placement stability, increase rates of kinship placements, improve recruitment and retention of families for teens, sibling groups and other special populations, and align the racial and ethnic composition of foster and adoptive families with that of children in need of homes.
- It would require such plans to report on the State’s actual foster family capacity and congregate care utilization, including the number, demographics, and characteristics of licensed foster families and children placed in congregate care. It would also require such plans to include a summary of feedback from foster and adoptive families and youth regarding their experiences with licensure, training, support, and reasons why parents stop fostering.

- It would require that the foregoing information be included in the annual child welfare outcomes report to Congress required by section 479A of the Social Security Act and would direct the Secretary of HHS to convene a working group to advise on the types, uses, and presentation of such data.

Prioritizing Placements with Relatives: Current law expresses a preference for placement of children with relatives and requires States to exercise due diligence to identify and notify a child's relatives when the child is removed from home, and to explain the options available to such relatives to participate in the child's placement and care. S. _____ would strengthen these provisions by requiring family partnership plans to establish goals and measure progress on how the State increases kinship placement rates by identifying, notifying, engaging, and supporting relatives as potential placement resources for children.

Engaging Kin and Non-Kin Foster Parents in Decision-Making: Foster and adoptive parents and the children they care for have first-hand experience with the effects of child welfare laws, policies and plans and thus can provide critical input to child welfare agencies and policymakers. S. 4725 acknowledges and promotes the important role of these individuals as follows:

- It would require that family partnership plans be developed in consultation with birth, kinship, foster and adoptive families, community-based service providers, technical assistance providers, and youth with lived experience with foster care and adoption.
- It would require that family partnership plans describe how the State will establish or support foster family advisory boards for the purpose of improving recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families.
- It would require that the working group on data collection, use and presentation include individuals with lived experience in foster care, including youth with experience in both family-based care and congregate care.