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May 31, 2017

The Honorable Susan Collins
U.S. Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Casey
U.S. Senate
393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Collins and Casey:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 66,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, we write to share our strong endorsement of the *Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act*.

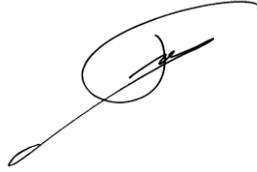
There is a growing number of children being placed into foster care, with many going into kinship care where they are often raised by their grandparents. A major driver of this trend is the ongoing opioid epidemic. Grandparents are presented with unique difficulties in raising children, including their decreased ability to save for retirement and their own physical and mental health conditions. As the opioid epidemic continues to negatively affect children, it is critical to support family members helping children affected by parental substance use.

Of the children in FY 2015 who entered foster care, 32 percent were cases where substance use was a factor, with an additional 6 percent due to alcohol abuse. Infants represented nearly a fifth of all removals that year, totaling 47,219.ⁱ An estimated 400,000 births annually are affected by prenatal exposure to alcohol and illicit drugs, representing 10 percent of all live births.ⁱⁱ In one state, for example, more than half of children under six entering the foster care system were from homes with opiate use.^{iv}

This legislation would help address these issues by creating a federal task force to look at the unique needs of grandparents and other relatives raising children. The bill would identify best practices and resources for grandparents raising children in their care, including the physical and mental health of both children and caregivers. Supporting kinship care providers is essential to alleviating the trauma children face when they are removed from their homes, and the AAP supports this legislation and the progress it would represent.

Thank you again for introducing this important legislation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Zach Laris in our Washington, D.C. office at 202/347-8600 or zlaris@aap.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fernando Stein', with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Fernando Stein, MD, FAAP
President
FS/zml

ⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Children's Bureau (2016). The AFCARS Report FY 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport23.pdf>

ⁱⁱ U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare. Substance Exposed Infants. Retrieved from <https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/resources/substance-exposed-infants.aspx>

^{iv} PEW Charitable Trusts. Drug-Addiction Epidemic Creates Crisis in Foster Care. Retrieved from <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2016/10/07/drug-addiction-epidemic-creates-crisis-in-foster-care>