



1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, In Illinois, over 200,000 children under the age
3 of 18 are living with and being cared for by more than 100,000
4 grandparents; and

5 WHEREAS, Grandparent caregivers, the majority of whom are
6 single women ranging in age from 30 to 90 with an average
7 annual income of \$15,000 to \$25,000, typically raise one to two
8 grandchildren and have been doing so for five years or longer;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, Factors contributing to the growing number of
11 grandparents raising grandchildren include, but are not
12 limited to, alcohol and drug abuse, neglect, abuse,
13 abandonment, death of a parent, HIV/AIDS, divorce,
14 unemployment, poverty, parental incarceration, teen pregnancy,
15 and welfare reform; and

16 WHEREAS, Due to their assumed caregiving responsibilities,
17 many grandparents deplete their savings and retirement income
18 and face severe financial risk and economic strains while
19 struggling to pay for expenses related to caring for the
20 grandchildren such as, but not limited to, food, diapers,
21 clothing, child care, medical treatment, legal assistance, and
22 housing needs; and

23 WHEREAS, Many grandparents take custody of and raise their
24 grandchildren after a harmful incident has been suffered by
25 their grandchildren that has caused the Department of Children
26 and Family Services to designate them to be "at risk"; and

27 WHEREAS, Many other grandparents take preventative
28 measures by choosing to take custody of and raise their
29 grandchildren prior to their grandchildren suffering a harmful
30 incident when they recognize that their grandchildren's

1 health, safety, and welfare are at risk; and

2 WHEREAS, Grandparents who take custody of their
3 grandchildren prior to the grandchildren's suffering of a
4 harmful incident are ineligible for foster care funding and
5 assistance from the Department of Children and Family Services;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, The only financial assistance option for this
8 group of grandparents is "child only" grants from the
9 Department of Human Services' Temporary Assistance to Needy
10 Families (TANF) program; and

11 WHEREAS, The Department of Children and Family Services'
12 foster care program provides monthly financial assistance that
13 is three to four times greater than the TANF "child only"
14 grants, and it also provides counseling and child care support;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, Grandparents raising grandchildren who are not in
17 the foster care program are as valuable to the grandchildren
18 and to the State as those who are in the foster care program;
19 therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
21 NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
22 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that the Department on Aging, in
23 collaboration with the Departments of Children and Family
24 Services, Public Aid, and Human Services and any other relevant
25 agencies, is directed to complete an assessment of existing
26 State and federal assistance programs that includes the
27 following:

28 (a) a review of support provided to grandparents through
29 the Department of Children and Family Services' foster care
30 program, KidCare, and other relevant programs;

31 (b) a review of support provided to grandparents through

1 the Department of Human Services' TANF program and other
2 relevant programs;

3 (c) a review of all other means of grandparent-related
4 support provided by State-funded and federally funded
5 programs; and

6 (d) the estimated cost to the State if grandparents were
7 not willing to or refused to take custody of and raise their
8 grandchildren; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That the Department on Aging, in collaboration
10 with the Departments of Children and Family Services, Public
11 Aid, and Human Services and any other relevant agencies, shall
12 explore new or alternative grandparent assistance methods
13 including, but not limited to:

14 (a) reviewing the effects to the State of creating a
15 program that would provide monthly supplementary grants, in
16 addition to TANF "child only" grants, to grandparents that
17 would close the funding gap between the foster care program and
18 the TANF "child only" grant program;

19 (b) assessing the feasibility of funding the monthly
20 supplementary grant program described in the preceding item (a)
21 through a Medicaid waiver;

22 (c) reviewing the effects to the State of allowing
23 grandparents who voluntarily accept responsibility for their
24 grandchildren prior to the children's entrance into the foster
25 care system to be permitted to enter the foster care program;
26 and

27 (d) conducting public hearings across the State to gather
28 testimony from grandparents, relatives, and others regarding
29 what assistance they feel they need or would like to have in
30 Illinois; and be it further

31 RESOLVED, That the Department on Aging shall issue a report
32 highlighting the findings of this Resolution's requirements
33 and recommendations for improving Illinois' assistance to
34 grandparents raising grandchildren to the Governor and the

1 General Assembly no later than July 1, 2006; and be it further

2 RESOLVED, That a copy of the report be sent to the
3 Directors of Children and Family Services and Public Aid and to
4 the Secretary of Human Services.