



Keeping Families Together: HB 1747

2022 Legislative Priorities

Ending a dependency case does not require the termination of parental rights. Our laws already provide for two other ways to end cases with guardianships, pursuant to RCW 13.36 and RCW 11.130 – yet these options are seldom used. Instead, the state prioritizes termination.

This is a racial justice issue. Indigenous children are 2.7 times more likely than white children, and Black children are 2.4 times more likely than white children to experience the termination of both parents' rights¹. Nationwide, Washington is among the worst states for the racially disproportionate termination of parental rights.

Proposed Legislation

1. Ensure relatives remain prioritized for placement and permanency throughout the duration of a child welfare proceeding.
2. Require the state to prove that guardianship is insufficient to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the child before a court terminates parental rights.
3. Clarify that relatives of dependent children who enter into guardianships pursuant to the new Uniform Guardianship Act (RCW 11.130) qualify for the Relative Guardianship Assistance Program.

Select Relational Permanency over Legal Permanency

Recent guidance from the federal Children's Bureau strongly urges state lawmakers to prioritize "relational permanency" – resolving dependency cases in ways that maintain a child with their family².

When a child in a dependency case and cannot be returned home, the state should prioritize ending the case by maintaining that child in their family and preserving the child's family and community relationships. The termination of parental rights does not always lead to adoption, and children with extended family support do not necessarily need to be adopted to be safe and stable. Indeed, research shows that youth with a high level of need who are moved to a family placement are more likely to achieve permanency than youth with low needs who were never placed with family.

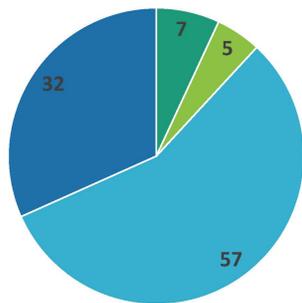
¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6868298/>

² <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/im2101.pdf>

Using Kinship Guardianship to Mitigate Inequities and Racial Bias

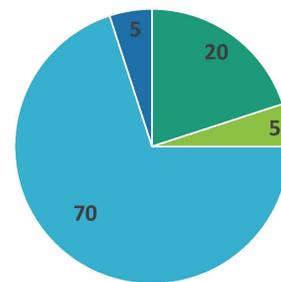
- Kinship care is a values orientation, directing focus on preserving and strengthening families of color
- By requiring the state to discuss guardianship with families we hope to elevate the voices, perspectives, and, ultimately, the preferences of those closest to the child
- Caregivers assume agency over the rearing of the children in their care, minimizing formal surveillance
- Guardianship stipends are a means of economic justice (lifting child poverty and preventing caregivers from economic diminishment)

All cases that exited the court in 2020



■ Guardianship 7% ■ Aged Out Youth 5%
■ Reunification 57% ■ Adoption 32%

Future vision of cases exiting the court



■ Guardianship 20% ■ Aged Out Youth 5%
■ Reunification 70% ■ Adoption 5%

Where we
want to be

The Keeping Families Together Coalition

Children’s Home Society of Washington, Shrounda Selivanoff and Dave Newell; Partners for Our Children, Laurie Lippold; Youthnet, Carla Arnold; Mockingbird Society, Liz Trautman; Fostering Connections and Families, Katie Biron; LCYC, Erin Shea McCann; Washington Association for Children and Families, Jill May; King County DPD, Tara Urs; and others.

Our coalition is interested in pursuing legislative strategies to keep families together. We are continuing to look at ways to address structural racism and strengthen families and communities.