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CONGRESS PASSES THE FOSTERING CONNECTIONS TO SUCCESS AND INCREASING ADOPTIONS ACT OF 2008

Today Generations United celebrates the passage of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. The Act will help thousands of children and youth by promoting permanent families for children in foster care through relative guardianship and adoption and helping with access to other supportive services for grandparent- and other relative- headed families.

“The bill is the most significant federal recognition to date of the contribution grandparents and other relatives make in raising our nation’s children,” said Generations United Executive Director Donna Butts. “We thank the Senate and House for taking this groundbreaking and bi-partisan action: one that dramatically increases the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of children and their families.”

The bill will provide support for children being raised by grandparents and other relatives and their caregivers by authorizing subsidized guardianship payments to relatives caring for children in foster care. It will also establish kinship navigator programs to help link relative caregivers both inside and outside of the child welfare system to a broad range of services and supports that will help them meet the needs of the children in their care. Additionally, the bill will extend federal support for youth to age 21 and help keep brothers and sisters together.

“You 'age out' of a system, but you don't age out of a family,” added Ms. Butts.

The bill is the most important reform of the country’s child welfare and foster care system in at least a decade. It also offers for the first time many American Indian children important federal protections and support and improves education and health care coordination for children in foster care. The bill unanimously passed both chambers and is fully paid for. It resolves differences between the House-passed Fostering Connections to Success Act (H.R. 6307) and the Senate Finance Committee-approved Chairman’s Mark of S. 3038, the Improved Adoption Incentives and Relative Guardianship Support Act.

Senators Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and Representatives Danny K. Davis (D-IL) and Timothy Johnson (R-IL) were early and steadfast champions of legislation to support grandfamilies with the first introduction of the Kinship Caregiver Support Act over four years ago, many provisions of which were included in this final bill. Their consistent advocacy combined with the strong leadership of Senate Finance Committee Chairman, Max Baucus (D-MT) and Ranking Member Charles Grassley (R-IA), and Income Security and Family Support Subcommittee leaders Jim McDermott (D-WA) and Jerry Weller (R-IL) made this landmark legislation a reality.

For more details on the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, go to <http://www.gu.org/Polic7231752.asp>.

Generations United, a membership organization of over 100 national, state, and local organizations representing more than 70 million Americans, works to improve the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies.