



Live/No Bullets

**Statement of Senator Barack Obama
On Grandparent- and Other Relative-Caregivers
December 16, 2005**

Mr. President, across the country there are more than 6 million children living in households headed by a grandparent or other relative. Regardless of the reason children enter relative care – the death of a parent, neglect, abuse, military deployment, or poverty – it is never, ever the fault of the child. I commend grandparents and other relatives who step forward to care for these children, keeping the children out of foster care while providing safe, stable homes, often at great personal sacrifice.

In my state of Illinois, 9% of the children live with non-parent relatives. Grandparents and other relative caregivers often provide the best chance for a loving and stable childhood for the children in their care, but their hard work and dedication often goes unnoticed. Today I offer my formal acknowledgement and deepest appreciation for the ongoing service of these caregivers to our country and our nation's most valuable asset -- our children.

There are still far too many barriers preventing grandparent- and other relative-caregivers from accessing the services they need. For example, even though grandparent-caregivers are eligible for many housing programs through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD officials on the ground often unwittingly exclude grandparents from accessing housing because of confusion over the relevant laws. For this reason, I recently worked with my colleague Senator Stabenow to obtain \$4 million in new funding for grandparent-caregiver housing demonstration projects.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to improve access to services for grandparent- and other relative-headed households. My grandparents played a central role in my upbringing, and without them I would not be standing before you today. I am certain that the same can be said of thousands of children and adults in Illinois and across the country. It is time that we recognize the contributions of these worthy relative-caregivers, and grant them the access to federal services that they deserve.