Ensure the Senate Proposal to Fund KinGAP
Outside of the Foster Care Block Grant is in the Enacted Budget

In its one-house budget bill, the Senate proposes to fund the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) outside of the Foster Care Block Grant. The CHAMPS-NY and New York State Child Welfare Coalitions, statewide groups made up of organizations, providers, attorneys, advocates, and people impacted by New York’s child welfare system, urge elected leaders to ensure this proposal – to invest $25 million to establish an independent and open-ended funding stream for KinGAP – is included in the enacted budget. Passage of this proposal will eliminate barriers to using this program that is proven to keep children out of foster care, reduce the likelihood that a child will “age out” of foster care without a family, and provide more youth a permanent, loving home with kin.

Background
The trauma that children separated from their family and placed in foster care experience can be mitigated when they are placed with family, preferably with relatives or someone with whom they have an existing relationship. KinGAP also paves the way for children to leave foster care and live with kin by providing ongoing support to kinship caregivers. Finally, KinGAP is a proven strategy for reducing the number of youth exiting the system without permanent family supports that all youth need and deserve.

Funding KinGAP outside of the Foster Care Block Grant is crucial for racial equity: 67% of youth who are eligible for KinGAP are Black and Latinx children. When youth age out of foster care without returning to their family or having another form of permanency, they face devastating outcomes in education, employment, housing and justice-involvement, all of which disproportionately impact youth of color.

KinGAP is under-utilized across the state. In 2019, there were 7,058 children in foster care with a relative, but only 526 (7%) children statewide left foster care via KinGAP. In one county that prioritizes using KinGAP, it resulted in notable positive outcomes for child and family well-being: 25% increase in reunification, removing the need for any permanency subsidy, on average 17 months (nearly a year and a half) less in foster care compared to adoption cases, and decreased caseload sizes.

KinGAP is a proven strategy to reduce the over-representation of Black and brown New York children in foster care, reduce the amount of time children stay in foster care, reduce the likelihood they will “age out” of care, and strengthen families.

New York must fund KinGAP outside of the Foster Care Block Grant this year and add at least $55.2 million to the Foster Care Block Grant, as proposed in the Assembly one-house budget bill, to support statewide increases to foster parent reimbursement rates.