

Kinship Care Bill HB 197

in Ohio General Assembly

The Kinship Care Bill is currently in the Ohio House Judiciary Committee. This bill in a brief nutshell will do the following:

- Allow Power to Attorney to additional adult relatives besides grandparents for a child placed in kinship care
- Require all county Children Services to notify grandparents & other adult relatives if a child is being placed in foster care within 30 days of child's removal from birth parent(s)
- Strongly encourage placement of siblings together in same home
- Extend Kinship Permanency Incentive (KPI) payments (special kinship care cash assistance program in Ohio) from 3 years eligibility to 5 years eligibility.

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(Memory Royal at Congressional Briefing on TANF, Washington, D.C. as part of Women for Economic Justice)

- Requires Ohio Department of Job & Family Services to study feasibility of paying kinship caregivers same income payments (kinship guardianship payments) as foster care payments. ODJFS will be required to complete study by Dec. 31, 2010.

We are hearing that some legislators have concerns about children being placed with low-income relatives. Please make your views heard! Call us at 1-877-862-5179 to find out what advocacy steps you can take & how to get involved in our Safe & Stable Families Campaign for Kinship Care & Poverty Reduction.

Words from the Sponsor of HB 197, Rep. Marian Harris

“It is acknowledged by professionals and non professionals alike who care about kids that staying with a relative or close family friend when parents are unable or unavailable to care for them is infinitely preferable to entry into the child welfare or judicial system.”

“.....I want what’s best for the child. I know a number of grandparents and other relatives caring for their grandchildren, nieces, nephews, sisters and brothers. This works! Let’s take the one tiny legal step that helps these caregivers provide education and medical care for the kids. Let’s do it before there’s a need for child welfare and the courts to step in and take over. If there’s reason for that intervention, it will happen. But let’s keep it simple when we can.”

WOMEN FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE in the U.S. House (and Senate) by *Christina Schnetzer, Clinton County*

How do you factor in all the sums that make a trip successful? Did I have fun? There were moments. Did I make new friends? Of course, you can't likely work as hard as we do, together, without finding an ally, along the way. Most importantly though, The bigger questions are "Did I make an impact, did I learn anything from the experience, and did I teach a lesson in return?"

I can most assuredly reply yes to those queries.

In a city as beautiful as our nation's capital, it is easy to be jaded as to what the true American Dream looks like. For some the goal is live, one day in that big White House on the mall, and for others it is wondering each day if you will have a home at all.

But on the Hill, there is room enough for all voices to be heard, all constituents to have a say in their government. Some politicians may even be numb to the plights of homeless veterans camped outside their own offices. But as we trudged to each office in the bone-chilling winds, our spirits were high as we approached our meetings with The Dept. Of Health and Human Services, and after our questions and concerns were answered, we were told that even folks on the Hill need a reality check, every now and again.

As we invited legislators and their aides to our briefing we were treated with respect and grace, and at our briefing we were welcomed with open arms by organizers and even a senator or two, and we were made aware that someone was listening, someone who could help make a difference. Senator McDermott gave an impromptu, yet moving speech about knowing the plights of the poor and abused in our country and he assured us that we were recognized and not forgotten by his administration, and for that I am most thankful. It is good to know 'Mr. Smith' came back to Washington.

I'm sure it is as important to recognize the efforts of the empathetic as it is to lean on legislators of opposing views to shift their prospective on American reality. As I watched from the frontlines of the panel, I could see the waves of faces in the crowd, could see their heads nod in understanding, I could see the moisture welling up in an eye or two, and could hear the audible gasps and sighs that related to our testimonies. And the policy briefing was no different, backing up our stories with ironclad statistics, our well chosen panel offered the numbers legislators needed to make more intelligent policy decisions.

Although I made a few new friends and a few more podiatric blisters, the effort is always worth the collective efforts and the overall vision that Dianna Spatz has boldly given form to with these personal Herstory accounts, that have the power to change minds and hearts and sometimes even laws, to recognize those less fortunate, in these hard economic times, of joblessness, and in many cases hopelessness, that permeates our society.



Women for Economic Justice

It was nice to be reminded that someone like Mr. McDermott is within our reach, to offer a hand and a compassionate ear. And no matter what is wrong with D.C. , we are also reminded of what's right and good about it. We have to remember that we are a modern melting pot of histories and ideals, religions and politics, as well as differing social positions. By empathizing with our neighbors as well as our leaders and using mutual respect as a goodwill vehicle, we move ourselves to another place of understanding, but at the same time up the evolutionary ladder to higher planes of humanity.

I can't imagine a better souvenir to bring home.

The Inestimable Value of Life

*by Christina
Schnetzer,
Clinton County*



(Christina Schnetzer testifies at Congressional Briefing on TANF, Feb. 25, 2010)

A week ago, Wednesday, I was having lunch in the Senate Cafeteria. Not such a big event for most on The Hill, but is always a thrill for me to rub elbows with some of the most powerful people in our country. I was there as a panel member for WEJ (Women for Economic Justice) to invite House and Senate members to our briefing the following

morning. We nudged our way to a table, half -occupied by pleasant and compliant folks, to our intrusion. Halfway through our meal, the lady nearest to me, looked a bit ill, she stood and threw her arms in the air, and I thought she was going to literally lose her senate lunch all over my suit, which would mean a ride back to my room at our hotel. You see, I was here all the way here from Ohio! Which became significant when her colleague shouted, "Do that one thing!"

"The Heimlich Maneuver? I asked, and added "She's choking." At once, I got up and placed my arms around her and nudged some important looking fellow behind me, so I could get firmly behind her, and gave her that thrust

to the diaphragm, that moved the obstacle out of her trachea.

A moment later, The woman composed and introduced herself. Turns out she is a very important with the U.S. Treasury . Once the initial shock of the incident was over, we all exchanged background and contact information.

I was thanked for saving her life, and I explained, I'm from Ohio; Harry Heimlich is too, the inventor of the life saving maneuver, that has saved countless lives, globally. I taught her to perform the technique to herself if no one else was around, and it ever happened again.

The logistics of who was seated at the table that day was not the issue, nor their positions, but it is safe to note that there was a diverse mélange of Americans present at the table, doing what Americans do best, look past the differences of their neighbors to find common ground, in hard times- a coming together of the spirit, to celebrate living. I'm sure many perspectives were changed about the value of life, and our collective places in it, the impoverished, (but not uneducated) DV victim on Medicaid, who saves the life of a high ranking public official, it just goes to show, you never know when it might be beneficial to move over and embrace new faces at the table.

Dear Friends,

Our state, the country and the world are locked in the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Below is a sign-on letter calling for a new safety net to protect the people of Ohio. We are seeking community, labor, and religious leaders as signatories. Please review the letter and if you support this effort, sign the form below and return it to us. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Logan Martinez 937-275-7259/ or the Contact Center 513-381-4242. This is a joint project of Ohio Empowerment Coalition and Organize! Ohio.....Logan Martinez

Dear Members of U.S. Congress, Ohio Legislators, and other elected officials:

We are facing the greatest crisis of our lifetime. In sheer numbers unemployment levels rival the darkest years of the Great Depression. Here in Ohio, 640,840 people are officially unemployed. Less than half are receiving unemployment benefits. Tens of thousands are not counted. They are the hidden unemployed. The safety net is tattered with giant holes. Thousands of home foreclosures, people unable to pay their bills, and growing numbers of tenant evictions are the inevitable human cost. Homelessness is growing and there are long lines at food pantries. 47 million Americans lack health insurance. The number is growing.

We are calling for US Congress and the Ohio state legislators to enact a new safety net to protect the people of Ohio. An effective safety net will protect people from the effects of our boom and bust economy. The following steps need to be taken. Under the TANF program, an end to arbitrary TANF time limits, harsh sanctions and low grants that are pushing millions of American families deeper into poverty. We believe that we need a new program to support single adults living without adequate income. These critical steps should be taken immediately. We are asking all Ohioans to come together to support this effort to help our unemployed and low-income neighbors during this crisis.....

Signature

Name: **Address:**

City: **Zip:** **Organization:**

E-mail: **Phone:**

Return to: loganmartinez2u@yahoo.com