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Lawmakers want to amend kinship care rules

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FRANKFORT Two Kentucky Senate Democrats, Dennis Parrett of Elizabethtown and Reginald Thomas of Lexington, have filed legislation for the 2019 General Assembly to amend the kinship care law to include fictive kin.

Fictive kin refers to individuals who are unrelated by either birth or marriage, but who have an emotionally significant relationship with another individual that would take on the characteristics of a family guardian.

This legislation would provide care and monetary provisions for relative and fictive kin caregivers who have temporary or permanent custody of a child. The monetary provision would be a minimum of \$300 monthly per child through the age of 18.



State Senators Dennis Parrett, left, and Reginald Thomas, right, are proposing an amending to the kinship care plan to include fictive care or non-family caregivers. (LRC photos)

“Just as we have more grandparents and aunts and uncles caring for children, we also have caregivers who are not related by blood. These individuals deserve the same type of support that we provide to relatives,” said Parrett, who has filed kinship program legislation for several years.

“This measure simply ensures that in addition to relatives, other individuals who may be raising children but are not related by blood will get some assistance for providing them with a permanent, safe home,” he said. “We want to do what is best for all these kids, but we do not want to put financial constraints on any of these families.”

Thomas agrees with his fellow Senator.

“Many caregivers who are not blood relatives are on fixed incomes and, by assuming this added responsibility, they now have an extra financial burden with which they must contend,” he said. “This would just provide some relief and make it easier for these individuals to give a permanent, safe home to a child. We need to support our fictive kin because that population is growing.”

Without kinship or fictive caregivers, foster care would be the only option for those children, according to Parrett, adding this program would save the state money. The average foster care placement cost the state approximately \$70 a day per child compared to the \$10 a day per child for kinship care.

“The foster care system does a great job but, when possible, it is more beneficial to have these kids with their own families or those individuals who already know and love them,” Parrett said. “We need to help provide a mechanism to ensure that they are in the best environment we can provide. I believe the best environment is with someone with whom they have a relationship – even if not kin by blood. It just makes sense to put them with someone who loves them, rather than to put them in the homes of strangers.”



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