

STATE SENATOR • IRMA CLARK-COLEMAN • 3RD DISTRICT

Clark-Coleman Press Release

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SEN. IRMA CLARK-COLEMAN PRAISES SENATE PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE SUBSIDIES TO GUARDIANS/CAREGIVERS

Clark-Coleman: Subsidy reduces strain on foster care system, offers children familiar stable homes

LANSING – Sen. Irma Clark-Coleman today praised Senate passage of SB 170 that will provide subsidies by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to court-appointed guardians or relatives of abused and neglected children. The legislation will create the "Subsidized Guardianship Assistance Act" to provide financial support to families willing to assume temporary or permanent guardianship of the child without financial loss.

The 2008-09 DHS budget appropriates about \$4.5 million for a subsidized guardianship program, and SB 170 will establish the framework for implementing it. The appropriation is estimated to provide subsidized guardianships for hundreds of children for the remainder of the year. The bill would impose no financial cost on local governments or county DHS offices because the subsidized guardianships would be completely funded at the State level.

"I am just thrilled for the futures of Michigan children," Sen. Clark-Coleman said. "Placement with a relative or legal custodian allows the child to retain some sense of continuity and permanency during an emotionally difficult time. And what better gift can we provide these children than a financially secure, warm and loving home."

While the primary goal of DHS is to keep families together, often parental mental or physical health problems, military service or other extenuating circumstances require children to be removed from the home. A placement with relatives is preferable; however potential guardians do not always have the necessary financial resources to provide for the child's needs.

The legislation is modeled after a subsidized guardianship program in Illinois, which has reportedly resulted in significant savings and permanent placements for a number of children in Illinois. Michigan is expected to experience similar results.

"Providing a fair subsidy to these relatives not only reduces the number of children in the state's foster care system, but offers the children familiarity, continuity and stability," Clark-Coleman said. "What a precious gift."

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State Sen. Irma Clark-Coleman represents the 3rd Senate District. She sits on the Banking & Financial Institutions, Education, Families & Human Services, and Senior Citizens & Veterans Affairs committees.