

STATE SENATOR • IRMA CLARK-COLEMAN • 3RD DISTRICT

# Clark-Coleman Press Release



P.O. Box 30036 • Lansing • Michigan • 48909-7536 • 517-373-0990 • Fax: 517-373-5338  
E-mail: SenIClark-Coleman@senate.michigan.gov • www.senate.mi.gov/clarkcoleman

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Contact: Sen Irma Clark-Coleman  
Phone: (517) 373-0990

## **SEN. CLARK-COLEMAN PRAISES PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE SUBSIDIES TO GUARDIANS/CAREGIVERS**

*Bill on its way to Governor for signing*

**LANSING** – Sen. Irma Clark-Coleman today praised unanimous House 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 bill now moves to Governor Granholm for signing.

The 2008-09 DHS budget appropriates \$ 4.6 million for a subsidized guardianship program, and SB 170 establishes the framework for implementing it. The bill will impose no financial cost on local governments or county DHS offices because the subsidized guardianships would be completely funded at the State level.

"This is just terrific news for thousands of Michigan children," Sen. Clark-Coleman said. "This action will not only reduce strain on the foster care system, but it will assure that children are placed in familiar and stable homes during an emotionally difficult time. And what better gift can we provide these children than safe and loving homes."

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, especially if the guardianship requires larger living quarters or giving up employment to care for the child.

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.

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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.*