



CENTER FOR THE RIGHTS OF ABUSED CHILDREN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 19, 2023

Aimee Jolley
Center for the Rights of Abused Children
aimee@thecenterforchildren.org
(602) 689-4052

Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs signs critical relative search bill to find family when children enter foster care

Phoenix, Ariz. - Yesterday afternoon, Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs signed [House Bill 2313](#), sponsored by Rep. Rachel Jones, to protect family relationships by searching for family when children enter foster care.

Research confirms that children who enter foster care and are placed with family immediately experience better long-term outcomes when compared to children living with non-relatives. It is in the child's best interest for the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) to conduct an immediate, thorough search for relatives when a child enters care. The reform will also reduce the trauma to children that comes from being moved multiple times.

House Bill 2313 is designed to accomplish this goal by ensuring DCS:

- Conducts a thorough family member search the moment a child enters foster care;
- Provides relatives with the necessary information to make an informed decision quickly;
- Works to place children with family members as soon as possible after a child enters foster care.

Last year, nearly 7,500 children entered the state's care. This bill will help the thousands of kids who enter care every year find greater stability and permanency with family whenever possible. Right now, about half of the children in care are living with relatives or kin, while the rest live in foster homes of non-kin, shelters, residential treatment facilities, and group homes.

"The Center works to ensure that every abused child has a safe and loving home," said Darcy Olsen, CEO of the Center for the Rights of Abused Children. "When it is not safe for children to stay at home, placing them with relatives is the next best thing."

Too often, DCS only produces a potential relative placement years after a child has been in the foster care system.

In one of the Center's recent cases, DCS removed a three-year-old child from her foster home - a home where she had lived since birth. Removing her from the only home she had known was traumatizing - trauma that could have been easily avoided.

In this case, the little girl had a close family member willing to give this child a home. The trauma this child experienced could have been avoided if DCS had not ignored a close family member's early request to be the child's placement. It was not until years later, on the eve of severing parental rights, that DCS approved the family for placement.

"HB 2313 ensures that DCS conducts an immediate and thorough search for ready, willing, and safe relative placements as soon as a child enters the system helping eliminate trauma and devastation for everyone involved," said Olsen. "This reform promises to help more children live and thrive within their extended families."

###

About the Center for The Rights of Abused Children: The Center for the Rights of Abused Children fights for better futures for America's abused children with a pro bono Children's Law Clinic, common-sense reforms and public interest litigation. Join our life-saving work to end violence against children today, thecenterforchildren.org.

Contact: Aimee Jolley at (602) 689-4052 or aimee@thecenterforchildren.org