



CENTER FOR THE RIGHTS
OF ABUSED CHILDREN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 22, 2023

Arizona Governor Hobbs signs Foster Care Bill of Rights protecting more than 11,500 children in foster care system and their caregivers

Phoenix, Ariz. - (May 22, 2023) - Today, **Arizona Governor Hobbs** signed Senate Bill 1186, proposed by the Center for the Rights of Abused Children, to protect the rights of approximately 11,500 children living in the foster care system and their caregivers, including approximately 2,900 licensed foster homes and thousands of unlicensed kinship caregivers caring for more than 5,300 children.

SB 1186 will enhance the rights of foster care children, foster parents, kinship placements, and biological parents by expanding an existing bill of rights and making those rights enforceable. Empowering parents, children, and foster caregivers to exercise their rights goes a long way to preserving families and ensuring children and caregivers' rights are protected.

SB 1186 accomplishes this goal by:

- -Bolstering rights for children in foster care - including educational stability, remaining connected to siblings, and accessing services after turning eighteen.
- -Strengthens notification provisions so children and caregivers alike can access and understand their rights and how to respond when those rights are overlooked or violated.
- -Allows parents, children and caregivers to request equitable relief from the court when rights have been overlooked or violated.
- -Expands caregiver rights to non-licensed kinship care placements - relatives, friends, or others with significant relationships to children in foster care.
- -Protects biological parents' rights by requiring they be continually notified of their rights, such as their rights to attorney representation and participation in services and case planning.

"Up until today, the rights of parents, children, and caregivers were limited and expressly unenforceable," said Darcy Olsen, CEO of the Center for the Rights of Abused Children. "Children suffering neglect and abuse were left without a meaningful way to assert their rights within a system that determines their families, their safety, and

their futures. Now, there will be an enforceable and meaningful bill of rights for children and caregivers to ensure the safety and future of Arizona's children."

Biological parents are frequently unaware of their legal rights both at the start of a child welfare investigation and throughout the case, contributing to unnecessary family separation.

Olsen added, "Research finds that when parents and children have sufficient protections, children in foster care more quickly reach permanency. And more than half of children in foster care are never informed of their basic rights, let alone how to exercise them."

The basic rights of abused and neglected children are simply ignored or blatantly violated on a regular basis in the child welfare system. In one of the Center's recent cases, a young woman was thrust out of foster care at age 18 to face the world alone. Only after discharge, she learned she was never provided transitional resources – resources that would have prevented her from facing homelessness and incarceration. Desperate, she once again sought aid from the agency that let her down. They ignored her, and they had no obligation to help. Only with the aid of our lawyers could she be heard and set back on a promising path.

No child should be denied basic human rights. And no child should lack the tools to hold the system charged with their care accountable.

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About the Center for The Rights of Abused Children: Our mission is to protect children, change laws, and inspire people - to ensure every abused child has a bright future. Join our life-saving work to end violence against children at www.thecenterforchildren.org

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