



TESTIMONY

Presented by

**Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez
Commissioner**

on

Oversight: Older Adult Kinship Caregiving Resources

before the

New York City Council Committee on Aging

on

**Tuesday, February 25, 2025
At 1:00 p.m.**

Introduction

Good morning, Chair Hudson and members of the New York City Council Committee on Aging. I am Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, Commissioner the New York City Department for the Aging (NYC Aging). I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today regarding resources for older adult kinship caregivers and the NYC Aging caregiving program overall. Kinship caregivers play a vital role in supporting New York City families and—like older adults across the five boroughs—they pour into the communities where they live by growing young people into vital members of society. More and more NYC Public Schools students have an older adult as their emergency contact, and this is to be expected as the share of older adults in New York City continues to grow as a proportion of the population. Because of the direct connection this form of caregiving has with New Yorkers under the age of 18, I am pleased to be joined today by my colleague from the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) who is available to share information about the supports ACS provides to caregivers, including kinship caregivers.

As I have said time and again, caregiving is a vital component of NYC Aging's Community Care Plan and is fundamental to shaping and building an age-inclusive New York City. Our city is home to over 1 million unpaid caregivers who serve a range of New Yorkers from fellow older adults to those with disabilities, and of course, New Yorkers under the age of 18. I know this experience firsthand and have said before, "Not only am I the Commissioner, I'm also a client." As I've watched my mother's aging experience, and in my role as Commissioner, I've learned that the challenges in navigating services even as the executive head of the largest Area Agency Aging in the United States, can only be maximized when experienced by a person who is not as familiar with aging resources. Families and caregivers ask "where do I begin," and they are frequently unaware of how to find help through city services. It is incumbent on NYC Aging to ensure that they have the resources they need to address their loved one's situation. I look to Council's partnership as we address the expanding number of older adults in New York City navigate disjointed services which our caregiver program works to make clear for caregivers. This also applies to kinship caregivers who are providing care to younger members of their families including their grandchildren and we are committed to connecting these older adults to the best services and resources that support their needs.

NYC Aging Caregiving Programs

The actions surrounding caring for another person, from cooking, cleaning, providing support in the home, errands, bathing, and other aspects of daily living, add stress to an individual's life, in addition to their professional or outside responsibilities, and make supporting these New Yorkers a priority for NYC Aging. We know that the share of older adults in New York City will continue to grow in the coming decades and so will the number of those caring for others including minors and young people. NYC Aging's caregiver program provides community-based support such as information and referrals, long-term care planning, counselling and support, as well as respite care and financial assistance for some types of assistive devices. I am extremely proud of the work that the caregiver programs at NYC Aging do for older adults and their families or loved ones, but also recognize that our work grows in proportion to the number of older adults in this city.

In response to Local Law 97 of 2016, NYC Aging conducted a survey in partnership with ACS and the Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities (MOPD) of unpaid, informal family caregivers in order to create a comprehensive plan to address their needs. This was the first survey of its kind in New York City to explore the needs of unpaid caregivers rather than those of the professional paid home care worker. The target population for this survey were caregivers for an individual 60 years of age or older, including those with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia, persons caring for individuals with disabilities between ages 18 and 59, and kinship caregivers, grandparents or older relatives caring for children under the age of 18. The results of this survey has helped NYC Aging develop innovations within the caregiver program based on three key findings: the overarching need for respite care, caregiver's needs for additional information and resources, and transportation resources as part of their caregiving responsibilities.

Contracted caregiver providers serve older adults and their caregivers through virtual and in-person services such as support groups and trainings, connections to the many services available to them as part of their caregiving responsibilities, help with techniques and best practices, and access to respite care and other resources to alleviate the stress of caregiving. Regardless of the age of the care receiver, a caregiver will attend to the daily needs of another person whether this is their physical, emotional, and financial supports for a family member, partner, or close friend. More than 5,000 New Yorkers are served annually by the caregiver program through our network of 12 community-based service providers.

Kinship Caregiving & Older Adults

Older adults caring for children or minors fall into a specific demographic served by NYC Aging. During the 2017 Unpaid Caregivers Survey, NYC Aging learned key points about this group which have defined the way we connect them to services and resources. Overall, kinship caregivers are predominantly women, more than half were Black Non-Hispanic older adults, and more than 60% were over the age of 65. While all caregivers generally spend time providing personal care to the care receiver, because of the nature of caring for minors, at the time of the survey, 64% of older adult kinship caregivers reported spending more than 40 hours per week of personal care. This demographic needed assistance in accessing information and services available to assist them in obtaining benefits and financial assistance, services to offer respite care, and legal services. In the years since this survey and the subsequent progress reports and updates we have provided Council, NYC Aging has refined and developed a growing caregiving program to serve older adults.

In New York State, 1 in 11 children will live in a kinship caregiving home where they are living with a relative who is not their parent. NYC Aging caregiver providers offer a range of services for older relatives providing care to children under the age of 18. Caregiver providers offer workshops that address the needs of kinship caregivers in addition to overall caregiving needs, counseling based on the caregiver and care receiver's needs, and respite care for short-term relief as caregivers navigate their duties and responsibilities. This is a vital component of the Community Care Plan and adds to the financial benefits of supporting older New Yorkers to ensure they can age-in-place within the communities they serve. Providing benefits and services for kinship caregivers keeps families within their neighborhoods and communities while supporting the young person who is experiencing changes within their family lives. This touches other areas of our work as well, such as the Tenancy Eviction Support Services (TESS) program where older adults who are caring for minors find themselves at threat of eviction and must be connected to a range of services provided through community care.

Because of this direct connection between kinship caregiver services and the Community Care Plan as well as our ongoing need to be as efficient and effective as possible in our efforts to ensure high quality services are provided to our clients, NYC Aging expanded kinship care services—previously provided by the now closed Grandparent Resource Center—and formally enveloped them into our caregiving programs. As with all our programs and services, NYC Aging also continues to evolve and refine what we provide for kinship caregivers through enhanced victim and crime prevention services in our elder justice contracts, a broader Citywide network of Older Adult Center programs, and leveraging the breadth of the NYC Cabinet for Older New Yorkers with our partner agencies. We have found that expanding these services met the direct needs of older adults through our existing resources and better served kinship caregiver participants of the former GRC. Kinship caregivers can access the same services and connections to programming they received from the standalone GRC unit within the current caregiving programs, OACs, elder justice providers, and connections to resources at partner agencies.

Future of Kinship Care

I understand that today's hearing also is to discuss Introduction 1184, which would create a kinship care program within NYC Aging to support older adults providing full-time care for a minor who is not their biological child. As I said regarding the expansion of NYC Aging caregiving programs, our contracted providers are already serving older adults who are kinship caregivers and providing guidance, support,

workshops, and connections to vital services and needs for this demographic of caregivers. We thank Council for your interest and support in older adults and the services and programs which best fit their needs and look forward to continuing discussions on this piece of legislation. As always, because of the direct connection between caregiver programs and the Community Care Plan, we remain focused on ensuring that all our programs and services best support older adults through our existing network of community-based resources.

Conclusion

Kinship caregiving has always been a key component of the Community Care Plan and we are so excited to understand how planning for the future continues to be part of our work in aging services at NYC Aging. This is shaping up to be a big year for our agency as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of our founding. We are looking forward to planning a slate of events, celebrations, and initiatives which highlight our programs and services including caregiver supports and the contracted providers who do so much amazing work on behalf of older adults. This coming November, we will celebrate National Family Caregiver Month and I hope that we can work with each of you to make that an incredible success for the many caregivers and care receivers throughout the five boroughs. As always, I appreciate Council's advocacy and deep commitment to supporting older adults and these programs and services. Thank you again for this opportunity to discuss caregiving needs for older adults and the kinship caregiving options that exist for older New Yorkers at NYC Aging.



Testimony at the Committee on Aging Oversight Hearing on Older Adult Kinship Caregiving Resources

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and esteemed members of the Committee on Aging. My name is Justine Tetteh, and I am the Director of Policy and Advocacy at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House. Thank you for holding this important oversight hearing on older adult kinship caregiving resources. I am here today to testify in favor of older adult kinship caregiving resources.

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House is a 131-year-old settlement house that started as a free kindergarten for immigrants and is among the oldest settlement houses in the nation. At its core, the work has not changed since our founding. In addition to comprehensive social services and programs for children, unhoused and formerly unhoused adults, the Neighborhood House oversees NYC Aging funded programs, including a Caregiver program, two Older Adult Centers, and a social adult day program. Last fiscal year, we served 769 clients through our Caregiver Program and over 5,000 members across all our older adult programs.

NYC Aging has been a cornerstone for older adult support and celebration and has transformed advocacy, research, and public knowledge into what it means to age with dignity and empowerment. Our NYC Aging funded Caregiver Program delivers much needed services to caregivers residing in congressional districts 8 through 12, including supportive counseling for caregivers experiencing burnout and stress, virtual and in-person support groups, assistance with the purchase of much needed items for to properly care for care receivers, respite services to allow caregivers time to cater to their own needs while someone care for their loved one whether in home, and many others. The communities we serve are rich in culture and familial values. Many caregivers do not acknowledge this and feel they are fulfilling their role as family members or loved ones. We have encountered countless adults who found themselves in a caregiver role without any resources or knowledge of where to obtain support. We have observed that kinship caregivers, grandparents or other older family members, who care for a child that they do not have legal custody of.

As we continue to advocate for additional funding for our older adult programs, we must also recognize the importance of supporting older adults in kinship dyads. Non-traditional families are embedded in our communities, with an older adult raising an adolescent family member or a family member with intellectual and/or development needs. Caregivers face immeasurable obstacles, including financial barriers, lack of social service support, legal challenges, and a neglect of representation in local state and federal policies. While we strive daily on improving the lives of older adults in our community, we should allocate more effort, funding, resources, and attention to aiding older adults caring for minors. We prioritize advocacy in preserving

family connections and services that minimize trauma that caregivers and care experience. We also prioritize healthy aging for our community members, who are the embodiment of strength, safety, and selflessness. NYC Aging's investment in funding for kinship caregiver programs would address the drought of representation and resources and improve the overall quality of life for both the caregiver and the care receiver. The Neighborhood House hopes that the stories of other kinship caregivers inspire our local government to approve investment in new funding streams for kinship caregivers, as it would be vital to ensure that these types of overlooked caregivers receive the services they need. We can only hope that with this momentum, organizations can continue to invest in NYC Aging's goal to build multigenerational programs and resources for years to come.

Chair Hudson and the members of the Committee on Aging – our organization appreciates your determination in improving kinship care in our city. Thank you for the opportunity to be a voice for this community.



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**2025 New York City Council
Committee on Aging Oversight Hearing on Older Adult Kinship Caregiving Resources**

Chair Hudson, and fellow members of the New York City Council Committee on Aging,

Thank you for holding this oversight hearing on Older Adult Kinship Caregiving Resources. We are writing testimony on behalf of the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (Met Council) to request your support of Introduction 1184-2025 *Establishing a Program to Support Older Adults Providing Kinship Care*.

For over 50 years Met Council has been one of America's largest Jewish charities dedicated to fighting poverty. We operate ten departments ranging from 100% affordable housing to our award-winning family violence program to comprehensive Holocaust Survivor assistance, senior programming, crisis intervention, and the country's largest kosher emergency food network. Met Council provides a wide array of support to over 320,000 New Yorkers annually.

Met Council's Geriatric Social Work Services support the aging residents who live in Met Council's inclusionary housing sites throughout the five boroughs. The Geriatric Social Workers at Met Council provide on-site case management and services, including but not limited to assistance with applying for benefits and re-certifying for benefits, as well as long-term care planning and short-term counseling.

The Geriatric Social Work Team at Met Council has first-hand knowledge of the extensive role kinship caregiving plays in supporting those in need of care in New York City. They also see the abundance of cases in which caregivers providing kinship care experience difficulties in obtaining necessary kinship care resources. Kinship caregivers provide a vital service in New York City and deserve access to resources that provide them with the same dignity that they work so hard to provide for their loved ones.

Based on data collected by the NYC Department of Aging, we know that nearly 2 in 3 adults providing non-foster kinship care are at least 65 years old. Based on the experiences of Met Council's Geriatric Social Work Team, we also know that many of those providing care are also at-risk individuals with Access and Functional Needs (AFN). While these needs may be temporary or permanent, they interfere with a given provider's ability to provide services to their relatives while attending to their needs.

This lack of access to resources has wide-ranging impacts on the lives of kinship caregivers. These impacts are both tangible and intangible. They often include home loss, impacts on savings, loss of dignity and independence, and other broad social and economic losses (e.g., legal and health care costs). These impacts are felt regardless of socioeconomic status, culture, and race. They can occur in any area of a caregiver's life where they lack necessary support.

Regardless of specific diagnosis or other presenting problems caregivers providing kinship care should be able to obtain comprehensive access to services. These services should also include innovative technology programs to support kinship caregivers in further helping themselves and the care

recipients. Whether those services are legal support, financial assistance, support groups, transportation services, wellness programs, mindfulness practice, or other best-fit interventions, the implementation of kinship caregiver services must be robust enough to meet the needs of those meeting the needs of others.

It is with this context that we urge your support for Introduction 1184-2025 *Establishing a Program to Support Older Adults Providing Kinship Care*. If passed, this law would substantially improve the support system for kinship caregivers in New York City, ensuring their needs are met and they can continue to provide essential care to their loved ones.

Thank you for taking the time to review our testimony, and we hope to continue to work with this committee and the New York City Council to support the aging population in New York City.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LW', is positioned above the typed name.

Lillian Wu, LMSW
Director of Geriatrics Programs
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty
Met Council

Testimony

New York City Council Committee on Aging

Oversight – Older Adult Kinship Program Caregiving Resources

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and members of the Committee on Aging,

My name is Bryan Ellicott-Cook (They/He), and I serve as the Director of Government Relations at SAGE, the nation's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ older adults. Since our founding in 1978, SAGE has worked tirelessly to advocate for policies and programs that empower LGBTQ+ elders, ensuring they can age with dignity, security, and support. From leading national advocacy efforts to providing direct services, we have remained at the forefront of combating social isolation, housing insecurity, and healthcare disparities among LGBTQ+ older adults.

I am here today to express SAGE's support for **Int. No. 1184**, which seeks to establish a program dedicated to supporting older adults providing kinship care. This initiative is critical in ensuring that older adults who are caregivers have access to the necessary resources, guidance, and community support to navigate the challenges of kinship care.

The Need for a City-Specific Kinship Care Program

In 2021, New York State enacted legislation defining "kinship caregivers" as non-parent relatives and family friends who take on caregiving responsibilities for children. This law grants these caregivers legal standing, enabling them to access vital benefits and services. Additionally, the state's **Kinship Navigator Program** provides essential resources, information, referrals, and assistance to kinship families, including those in New York City. While these existing programs offer valuable support, a city-specific initiative, such as the one proposed in **Int. No. 1184**, will ensure that kinship caregivers—particularly older adults—receive localized, tailored assistance to meet their unique needs

This initiative is especially critical for LGBTQ+ older adults, who are deeply engaged in caregiving roles. Research from AARP indicates that approximately **58% of LGBTQ+ adults aged 45 and older have either currently provided or previously provided caregiving for a loved one**. Many LGBTQ+ caregivers take on kinship roles without the same legal or financial protections afforded to traditional family structures. Without targeted support, they may struggle to access essential services, placing both themselves and the children in their care at risk. Ensuring these caregivers receive appropriate assistance will strengthen family stability, promote intergenerational well-being, and allow LGBTQ+ older adults to continue their invaluable caregiving work with dignity and security.

SAGE's Community-Driven Approach to Care

At SAGE, we have long recognized the power of community-driven care. Two of our most impactful programs—the **Care Management Department which has a Caregiving Program** which is funded by NYC Aging and the **Friendly Visitor Program**—exemplify how structured support systems can combat isolation, promote well-being, and ensure older adults receive the care and companionship they need.

- **SAGE's Care Management Department** provides case management services that connect LGBTQ+ older adults to housing, healthcare, financial resources, and other essential services. This mirrors the individualized case assistance proposed in this legislation and reinforces the importance of a structured, city-supported program to help older adults navigate complex caregiving responsibilities.
- **Friendly Visitor Program** pairs LGBTQ+ older adults with volunteers who offer companionship and social connection, reducing isolation and loneliness. Many participants are kinship caregivers who, while providing love and stability for younger family members, also face their own aging-related challenges. Programs like these serve as models for how a citywide kinship care initiative can uplift and sustain older caregivers.

Addressing the Needs of LGBTQ+ Caregivers in Kinship Care

While **Int. No. 1184** is a critical step forward, it must explicitly address the unique needs of LGBTQ+ caregivers by:

- **Recognizing Chosen Family Structures** – Many LGBTQ+ older adults rely on chosen family networks rather than biological relatives. The bill should ensure that chosen family caregivers receive equal access to resources and recognition in the program.
- **Providing LGBTQ+ Inclusive Service Training** – Many LGBTQ+ elders have faced barriers in accessing quality care and support. To ensure all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, case managers and service providers should undergo training in LGBTQ+ cultural responsiveness, ensuring services are accessible, affirming, and responsive to diverse needs.
- **Ensuring Housing and Legal Protections** – LGBTQ+ older adults, particularly those with lower incomes, often experience housing insecurity and discrimination. Housing assistance under this program must be explicitly inclusive to prevent barriers to access.
- **Supporting Trans and Non-Binary Caregivers** – Trans and non-binary older adults may face additional legal and social challenges in kinship caregiving, particularly concerning guardianship. The bill should explicitly affirm that all services and resources will be accessible and supportive of caregivers of all gender identities.

The Urgency of Protecting LGBTQ+ Caregivers in Today's Political Climate

At a time when LGBTQ+ rights and protections are increasingly under attack nationwide, we must ensure that LGBTQ+ elders and their caregivers have the resources and support they need to care for their loved ones. Many LGBTQ+ older adults have dedicated their lives to fighting for equality; they should not have to fight for access to essential caregiving resources. Establishing a robust kinship care program that explicitly includes and protects LGBTQ+ caregivers is essential to combating discrimination, strengthening community ties, and ensuring that all families—however they are formed—have the resources they need to thrive.

The Kinship Care Program for Older Adults lays a vital foundation for addressing the unique needs of older kinship caregivers, many of whom lack traditional support networks. Expanding educational resources, ensuring access to financial and legal guidance, and fostering community support are all crucial to enabling older adults to care for their loved ones while also prioritizing their own well-being.

This initiative is particularly vital for LGBTQ+ older adults, many of whom have faced decades of discrimination, may not have biological family support, and often rely on chosen family structures for caregiving. Ensuring that kinship caregivers have access to robust resources will help keep families together, promote intergenerational stability, and allow older adults to age in place with dignity and security.

I urge the City Council to pass **Int. No. 1184** with amendments to ensure that LGBTQ+ caregivers are explicitly included and supported. Thank you for your time and leadership in advancing protections for older New Yorkers.

Testimony of

The Legal Aid Society

on

Oversight- Older Adult Kinship Caregiving Resources

presented before

The New York City Council's Committee on Aging

Mahathi Yerra

Staff Attorney, Elder Law Unit

Civil Practice

The Legal Aid Society

February 25, 2025

The Legal Aid Society appreciates the opportunity to comment on the subject of creating new kinship resources for older New Yorkers and thanks the Committee on Aging for convening this hearing.

Who We Are

The Legal Aid Society (LAS), the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, was founded in 1876 to provide free legal representation to marginalized New York City families and individuals. The Legal Aid Society's legal program operates three major practices – Civil, Criminal, and Juvenile Rights – and through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel. With a caseload of nearly 200,00 cases and legal matters for clients, The Legal Aid Society takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States.

Our Civil Practice works to improve the lives of low-income New Yorkers by helping vulnerable families and individuals to obtain and maintain the necessities of life- housing, health care, food, and self-sufficiency. We serve as a “one-stop” legal resource for clients with a broad variety of legal problems, ranging, among others, from government benefits and access to health care, to immigration and domestic violence. Our depth and breadth of experience is unmatched in the legal profession and gives LAS a unique capacity to go beyond any one individual case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals, and broader, more powerful systemic change at a societal level. Our work has always taken an explicit racial and social equity lens, and the current housing crisis has further focused our efforts to advocate for the needs of New York's marginalized communities.

Since 1974, The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Office for the Aging (BOFTA) has offered comprehensive legal assistance to older New Yorkers through referrals from the Housing Court, Human Resources Administration, elected officials, and community organizations. BOFTA has used an interdisciplinary legal-social work framework to secure lasting solutions to the often-complex problems facing low-income New Yorkers.

In 2023, The Legal Aid Society created a city-wide Elder Law Unit, combining the Brooklyn Office for the Aging and the Bronx Assigned Counsel Project, which together, currently includes a robust, multi-disciplinary team specializing in eviction defense for seniors in

the Bronx and Brooklyn. The preservation of housing for a senior often involves many intersecting medical, financial, and social issues. The Elder Law Unit seeks to not only prevent their eviction but address and alleviate the underlying causes that lead to the eviction in the first place.

**Support for Int. No 1184: Establishing a Program to
Support Older Adults Providing Kinship Care**

The Legal Aid Society supports proposed bill Int. No. 1184, which seeks to establish a kinship care program (“The Program”) to support older adults who provide kinship care for their families.

In our Elder Law Practice, we often represent seniors in eviction cases when they have fallen through the cracks, leaving them socially isolated, without adequate food, medical care, or access to phone and/or internet. These older New Yorkers are often in great need of assistance in many areas of their life and are at risk of facing grave consequences when facing a possible or pending eviction. This is particularly true for older adults who are caregivers for children in kinship households, who are in the unique situation of raising children later in life, frequently on limited income, and often with less financial and social support than households headed by parents and foster parents. As a result, these households often require individualized support and assistance to match their needs and circumstances.

Approximately 321,305 children in New York are raised by grandparents in kinship care households.¹ In New York, more than 120,000 grandparents are responsible for their grandchildren and make up the majority of all kinship caregivers in New York. Many older caregivers raise these children while on fixed incomes and with limited access to benefits and programs that are available to parents and foster parents.² Many kinship households headed by

¹ Estimate taken from the American Community Survey 1-Year Subject Estimates, Grandchildren Characteristics Table, 2023, Report retrieved from:

[https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S1001?q=S1001&g=040XX00US36,36\\$0500000](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S1001?q=S1001&g=040XX00US36,36$0500000)

² American Community Survey 5-Year Subject Estimates, Grandparents Table, 2014-2018. Retrieved from: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=S1002&g=0400000US36&tid=ACSST5Y2018.S1002>

older adults who live at or below the federal poverty line and many of these households face on-going housing and food insecurity.

Accordingly, we welcome this legislation that would provide individualized case assistance to help these seniors and their families access vital resources and create a series of workshops to address relevant kinship caregiving topics that are vital to the health, safety, and quality of life of so many older New Yorkers and their families who otherwise may have fallen through the cracks.

The Program Should Ensure that Older Adults in Both Formal and Informal Kinship Care Arrangements Have Access to These Services

One hugely impactful way that the City Council can ensure that all older kinship caregivers obtain the resources they need for themselves and their families is to fully support caregivers in both formal and informal kinship arrangements. There are a variety of reasons why an older adult caregiver may not be able to obtain guardianship or full custodial rights to their kin, including wanting to preserve the relationship between the child and their biological parent, not being able to manage the bureaucratic and judicial routes to guardianship, etc. These circumstances should not make the older caregiver or their families less eligible for the individualized care assistance. In fact, older adults providing informal kinship care require more support and assistance as many of the existing programs to support kinship care may not be available to them.

Case workers should also be able to help explore all options with older caregivers in both formal and informal kinship households to maximize their income and resources, including applying for public assistance, the Non-Parent Grant, and FHEPS for those needing rental assistance. Case workers should be trained to help older clients learn how to apply for and renew available rental vouchers and the possible issues that may arise from a kinship arrangement. For example, a case worker may need to work with an older adult on how to report and update a change in household composition when they take over caregiving for a child. This would help prevent a possible holdover eviction proceeding due to an “unauthorized occupant” now being in the home. Case workers should also be trained to assist older adults to maximize the benefits for the family under their voucher or housing arrangement such as qualifying for a larger apartment or voucher with the addition of the child(ren) allowing them to provide the best living situation possible for their family.

Moreover, the materials related to the program that are distributed to older adult centers and posted on the New York City Department for the Aging (“Department”) website should make it clear that these services are available to both formal and informal kinship care families. We believe that the language used to describe eligibility criteria should be expansive enough to ensure that informal kinship caregivers know they can also seek these services. In our experience with this population, many older kinship caregivers often do not identify themselves as the “official caregiver” for their grandchild or other minor family member although they provide full-time care and the child primarily lives with them. This may be due to a lack of formal process or paperwork, no explicit communication about the arrangement between family members, or differing cultural differences.

The Workshops Should Be Optional and Include Additional Topics that May Assist Both the Older Adult Caregiver and their Families

The creation of specific workshops for older caregivers could be a supportive resource for obtaining important information about child development, addressing trauma, and navigating the legal and social issues that are involved in kinship care. However, it is crucial that access to individualized care assistance is not contingent on attending workshop sessions. This may create a barrier to many older adults who may not be able to attend the sessions in person and/or may not be able to access the sessions online.

Moreover, it could be useful to create sessions that may help the older adult, and their families learn about and navigate additional topics, such as how to enroll their children in school, how to advocate for the child in medical/healthcare settings, etc. The program may also choose to provide resources available in senior centers and on the Department’s website to provide general information and resources to assist with these unique needs.

The Program Should Provide Necessary Wrap-Around Services to Address Potential Barriers in Accessing Case Assistance Meetings and the Workshops

The program should ensure that older adults can access individualized case assistance and workshops. Through our work with seniors, we are aware that many struggle to navigate these administrative systems on their own. A maze of city agencies, countless programs with varying

qualifications, rules and points of access present a daunting if not impossible challenge for many older New Yorkers. The seniors typically struggle commuting to and from the centers for appointments and meetings. Their limited experience with or access to technology and the internet hinders their ability to upload documents where required or complete telephone or video interviews. Furthermore, they may need assistance gathering the necessary documents. For those caregivers with younger children, they may also need additional support to manage childcare while they attend their appointments and workshops.

When there are certain issues arise, the caseworkers should also consider connecting the older adults to legal service providers, social work referrals, financial management services, mental health services, meal delivery programs, etc. If there are specific housing issues that would need to be routinely referred to a legal services provider, the Department overseeing this program may want to specify a specifically funded program for a legal service providers to add capacity for providers to take these additional cases.

This program presents a valuable opportunity to make these benefits and programs more easily accessible for older New Yorkers, their families, and advocates. To do so, the program can coordinate with the older adult centers to provide transport and childcare services for caregivers. Senior Centers and resources like ACCESS-A-RIDE should provide free or low-fare transportation for both the older adult and their children to travel to and from the facilities and Benefits Centers. They should also provide support for childcare needs for older caregivers who may need to schedule childcare while they are out of the home, or the children are out-of-school. The program should also offer home visits for caregivers who are homebound.

Conclusion

Thank you for reviewing our testimony and for the opportunity to comment on this bill. In sum, establishing these resources could help many kinship families throughout New York City.

For more information, please contact Mahathi Yerra at myerra@legal-aid.org or 929-7092799 or Jeannine Cahill-Jackson at jcahilljackson@legal-aid.org, or at 646-856-0189.



The Harry and Jeanette
Weinberg Center for Elder Justice

AT THE HEBREW HOME AT RIVERDALE

Testimony of
The Weinberg Center for Elder Justice
Before the
New York City Council
Committee on Aging
Regarding
Older Adult Kinship Caregiving Resources
February 25, 2025

Over 1.3 million New York City residents serve as caregivers for grandchildren, disabled adults, and older adults. A significant number of these caregivers are themselves older adults. While occupying a caregiver role can provide older adults with a sense of purpose and deepen bonds with the person they are assisting, these relationships can also create immense physical, psychological, emotional, and financial strains that put both the caregiver and the care recipient at risk of harm. As a provider of elder justice services to New Yorkers who have experienced elder abuse for twenty years, The Weinberg Center for Elder Justice regularly sees two distinct types of cases where an informal caregiving dynamic was a contributing factor to mistreatment: when a person over 60 experiences mistreatment from a caregiver family member who is also an older adult; or when an older adult caregiver becomes more vulnerable to abuse or less likely to leave an abusive situation due to their care taking responsibilities.

In the majority of elder abuse cases an older adult is harmed by a person they know and trust, often a family member. As older adults age, family may take on new responsibilities to assist them with their activities of daily living or meet other medical or social needs. While the majority of informal caregivers provide adequate support to their loved ones, in some situations, a well-intentioned care provider might lack the training and knowledge needed to adequately meet the changing medical and assistive needs of the older adult. Other times a loved one may enter into a caregiving relationship without an adequate understanding of how much assistance the older adult requires and may be unprepared or unwilling to meet the full breadth of needs that are presenting. This is particularly true if the caregiver is also an older adult with their own changing health needs. Neglect by a caregiver who is unable to adequately fulfill the responsibilities they have taken on can have very serious consequences for the health and safety of an older adult. However, these concerns can be mitigated by facilitating access to long term



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care planning and training supports that assist the care provider in planning for an appropriate and sustainable role in meeting the needs of their loved one.

Not only does becoming an informal caregiver come with increased responsibilities, it can also dramatically change the relationship dynamic between the care provider and recipient. No longer are they just a spouse, grandparent, or child; they now have new duties, concerns, and challenges that are associated with meeting the needs of the person for whom they are providing care. These changes may require them to fulfill roles that are uncomfortable and can create conflict and stress that exacerbate existing abusive dynamics or create new fault lines for a breakdown in the relationship. In the New York City Department for the Aging's 2017 Survey of Informal Caregivers, over half of caregivers reported that they were providing at least 30 hours of care per week and many of the responses from those surveyed articulated the pressure of being primarily responsible for another's care and the negative effects of the reorientation of their social and professional lives towards their caregiving role. If not properly supported and addressed, these new relationship dynamics can lead to resentment and frustration that risks finding an outlet in physical and psychologically abusive behavior. Support groups, counseling, and respite services can help an informal care giver balance their responsibilities with their own needs and assist them in finding safe outlets for the very real challenges and hardships they face in assisting their loved ones.

As DFTA's 2017 Survey highlighted, approximately half of caregivers for older adults reported having financial problems, and even fewer were employed. While financial support, in the form of living space, shared household expenses, and direct payments are often legitimate arrangements made between an older adult and their caregiver, co-mingling of resources and economic dependence are also common risk factors for financial exploitation. Not only do many caregivers experience more limited economic opportunities as a result of their caregiving responsibilities, they may also incur new expenses trying to meet the needs of an older adult, for example purchasing caregiving supplies or paying for home modifications needed to make the residence safe and accessible to the older adult. Connection to resources such as long-term care planning to explore ways in which care givers might be compensated or financial assistance for certain types of assistive devices can help keep the orientation of the

caregiving relationship focused on meeting the long-term care needs of the older adult and limit the kinds of financial entanglements that can lead to abuse.

The risk of harm to an older adult receiving informal care is only one half of the equation. Many of the same stresses that may lead to a caregiver causing harm are also common risk factors for the caregiver themselves to experience mistreatment, including social isolation, financial dependence, and changes in one's living situation. Older adults who take on a caregiving role often do so at the expense of meeting their own needs, missing medical appointments, limiting their participation in community-based social activities, and making financial sacrifices that put them at risk of harm. At the Weinberg Center, we have seen a number of cases where an older adult remained in an abusive or financially exploitative living situation because they were the primary care provider for a grandchild and did not have the knowledge or support needed to create an environment where they could continue in that kinship caregiving role, while also addressing their own mistreatment. While there are a number of programs through New York City and State to assist informal kinship caregivers in addressing their own needs, new programming is still needed to fully assist older adults and should include education about elder abuse and the resources available to assist those experiencing or at risk of harm.

In all of these circumstances, access to support services that provide older adults with training, counseling, respite care, case assistance and financial support are vital to ensure that informal caregivers have the tools they need to safely meet the needs of their loved ones and protect themselves from harm. Even though there are currently robust services offered through DFTA's NYC Aging Caregiving Program, more support is needed as New York City's population ages and caregivers continue to identify the need for information on the availability and access to services. The Weinberg Center for Elder Justice supports the Chair's proposal to create new kinship caregiving resources for older adults and to facilitate broader awareness of available resources for informal older adult care givers through written materials and informational sessions at older adult centers and believes such actions are a vital tool in the prevention of elder abuse for both providers and recipients of informal caregiving relationships.

From: [Cheryl Jackson](#)
To: [Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Testimony for City Council on Aging
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 6:57:56 PM

On Monday, February 24, 2025 at 06:22:35 PM EST, Cheryl Jackson [REDACTED] wrote:

As the former Deputy Director, of the Grandparent Resource Center within the NYC Department for the Aging, I would like to submit testimony regarding the importance of resources for older adult kinship caregivers.

I think we should start at the beginning. When a grandchild or other kinship relative comes into the life of an older adult it's never under favorable circumstances. The first thing to understand is that both the child and the adult are both experiencing trauma, sadness, possible feelings of guilt and/or depression which can also manifest in physical illnesses, real or imagined. That alone is enough to warrant services. So, it's clear they are not coming together under the best of circumstances. Oftentimes, the caregiver tries to hide their pain in order to be strong for the child, or in some cases children. But, often people forget that the caregiver may have lost their adult child, while at the same time, the child has lost their parent. What a precarious position to be in. As a result, the child may act out because they cannot understand why whatever it is that happened, happened to their parent. I also want to point out that sometimes the parent may have been a victim of a violent and senseless crime. The only way to truly understand the range of emotions and circumstances is to try to imagine yourself in this position. How would you feel? How do you comfort the child or children? You're in pain. The children are in pain. Everything happens so swiftly and unexpected. Where do you go? What do you do? How do I do this? The child/children are counting on me, but, this is a place in life I've never been. Who comforts me? Who do I reach out to? There is no handbook or guide for moments such as this. Now, that you have some understanding of how some of these situations come about, I hope you are open to the fact that help via an Older Adult Kinship Caregiving Resource Center is more than necessary.

Kinship caregivers need information and assistance on so many levels; and they need it right away. Community support through city agencies would ease some of the burden and help deconstruct some of the confusion. Supports like the Grandparent Resource Center validated what the caregivers were going through

and connected them to a myriad of services. The Caregiver usually needs financial assistance and tangible items such as beds, clothing and food. If the caregiver resides in senior housing then new residential accommodations are necessary. Where do I get finances for this? How do I begin to do any of it? How do I register the children for school? What if I don't have access to certain documents? How do I even know what they are? Where and how do I get them? All of these services and more are needed. Step by step information would be more than beneficial. Remember so many rules and regulations have changed from the time the caregiver raised children of their own. Parenting information applicable to today's world, as well as, information on the various developmental stages of a child are sorely needed. Today's teens are not the teens of yesterday.

I recently met a young woman while traveling on Amtrak who worked at a church in one of our Southern states. She informed me that grandparents had come to her in need of services and she had no idea what to do. The state did not have resources available to older adults finding themselves in the sudden position of kinship caregivers. We exchanged numbers. She called me within a day or two for assistance: (1)where to start, (2)what questions to ask, and; (3) next steps. Unfortunately, I had to refer her to resources in other states which may or may not have been of any real or substantial assistance to her. Now, that can't be allowed to happen in New York City.

In addition, to community supports, one centralized entity, such as a Older Adult Kinship Caregiving Resource Center would be monumental in bringing all of the necessary resources together under one roof. That agency would be able to stay on top of resources and reach out to community supports throughout the city as they provide concrete services. The Older Adult Kinship Caregiving Resource Center will be able to liaison to community agencies throughout the five boroughs providing a reservoir of knowledge, information, cohesiveness, validation, eliminate confusion, frustration and uncertainty. In a city the size of New York such a resource is sorely needed.

Cheryl Jackson, MSW

**Older Adult Kinship Caregiving Resources
New York City Council Hearing
Committee on Aging
February 25, 2025**

My name is Dr. Deborah Langosch, LCSW and I'm the former director of the JBFCS Kinship Care Program as well as the former co-chair of the NYC Kincare Task Force and Chairperson of the Brooklyn Grandparents Coalition. I currently serve as a co-executive editor of the national online *GrandFamilies Journal* and a founding member of the GrandFamilies Outcome Workgroup.

I am very appreciative to the City Council and to the Committee on Aging for holding this hearing and bringing attention to the challenges and struggles of NYC kin caregiving families. We hope that your proposal will reinstate needed resources and services to respond to kincare families' needs.

I have been working with thousands of NYC kincare families for over 30 years as a clinical social worker providing direct services, as a program director who started several kincare programs in Brooklyn and Manhattan and have been recognized as a mental health specialist addressing issues of loss and trauma for children being raised by relatives.

There is a dire need for programs to support kincare families in NYC. The loss of the Grandparent Resource Center at DFTA in 2023 was devastating to the many families who received needed services there. Children come into the care of their grandparents and other relatives as a result of parental abuse, neglect, substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, illness or death. These relative children have endured tremendous loss and often repeated traumas. Kin caregivers have stepped forward to care for their grandchildren and have kept them out of traditional foster care. Although caregivers have shared their joys and commitment to raising their relative children, they've also described their frustration, discouragement and depression about the lack of services and difficulties accessing the limited ones available in order to care for their relative children. Many of the

children are not part of ACS or the child welfare system and caregivers are on their own to find ways to care for and support the children they're raising. This means navigating with numerous NYC agencies such as HRA for public assistance benefits and SNAP, NYCHA for housing, DOE for educational services and agencies to receive mental health services. Each of these programs has separate criteria for eligibility which can be overwhelming and inefficient. When caregivers try to access entitlements and benefits to support their children, they have encountered barriers and are frequently denied access.

Caregivers often need a care manager who knows how to advocate and navigate through this complex mire of bureaucracy and systems. That was one of the primary functions of the GRC at DFTA. Without this, caregivers don't often receive the resources and benefits to which they're entitled, and the children don't get needed services. Families struggle and then face dire situations.

If the GRC or a comparable program was reinstated, it would allow kin caregivers to access necessary services to care for their relative children in the best possible ways. I hope that you'll recognize and support this endeavor. Relative caregivers have done so much with so little. It is essential to provide assistance and help empower kinship caregivers in order to create permanency, security and continuity for their relative children.

Thank you.

Dr. Deborah Langosch, LCSW

Older Adult Kinship Caregiving Resources

New York City Council Hearing

Committee on Aging

February 25, 2025

Good day,

My name is Rolanda Pyle, LMSW and I'm one of the former Directors of the Grandparent Resource Center (GRC) at the New York City Department for the Aging. I became the Director of the GRC, 30 years ago, the year it started in 1995 until 2005. I then went on to work at the Brookdale Foundations Relative as Parents Program (RAPP) and later at Sunnyside Community Services with the Caregiver Program. Before working at the GRC, I worked for a community-based organization, Miracle Makers Inc, where I ran a local grandparent program. So, I have had the experience working with this population at the local, city and national level and can testify to how much the services are needed. I have also contributed articles to magazines and professional journals including the national online *Grandfamilies Journal; Families, Mobility and Work; The New Social Worker*, and *GRAND* magazine.

I am very grateful to the City Council and to the Committee on Aging for holding this hearing and hope that it will not only bring attention to this needed issue but will reinstate much needed services. The data on the State Fact Sheets shows that there is a great need for services -for grandparents responsible for their grandchildren in New York.

For some background, the GRC was started after a Mayoral Conference under Mayor Guilliani, "Unplanned Parenthood Grandparents Raising Grandchildren" was held in September 1993 – which led to the 2nd Mayoral Conference in February 1995 where the GRC was launched under Commissioner Herb Stupp, with additional funding from the then Administration on Aging.

Services included an information hotline; case management; and technical assistance to those throughout the city providing services. We established a Grandparent Support Group Facilitator Network after realizing that many organizations/agencies in the community needed direction and assistance in helping these grandparents and other relatives raising children, as they still do today. We also concentrated on effective marketing techniques that can be tailored to different platforms and populations to get the word out that the services were available.

In addition, to assisting grandparent caregivers individually, we established a grandparent resource directory and a resource guide; a training for the community on how to start their own grandparent group and program; continued information and training for support group leaders and workshops for grandparent caregivers that dealt with child development and parenting skills; effective discipline; bereavement and dealing with children with special needs and a grandparent empowerment training to name a few. We also established

borough-wide coalitions in each borough modelled after the Brooklyn Grandparents Coalition. This enabled programs to meet regularly on their own, share information and local resources.

The GRC also participated in and worked with the NYC Kinicare Task Force; NY Committee for Kinship Family Care; and other local committees and tasks forces and with national partners like Generations United, AARP, and the Brookdale Foundation Group.

We collaborated and partnered with ACS, DOE, HRA, DOHMH and other city agencies. We worked with Family Court to educate them on the issue. In 2003, we held an education forum for grandparents in the city where the Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott, the ACS Commissioner Bell and DFTA Commissioner Edwin Mendez-Santiago participated and listened and learned the concerns of the grandparent caregivers.

The GRC should be reinstated so that kinship caregivers will be able get the services and resources needed to raise their grandchildren and so that community organizations and caregiver programs working with kinship caregivers can gain knowledge, training and information, and have a network that works together to assist these caregivers in the best way possible.

Thank you.

From: [Carole Cox](#)
To: [Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Kinship Care Meeting. February 25, 1PM
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 4:20:54 PM

Dear Committee,

I am submitting the link to my article, Empowering Grandparent Caregivers via In-Person and Virtual Programs. It is published in the Winter 2025 Edition of Generations. As stated in the article, virtual programs can be an important learning tool and support for kinship grandparents, many of whom find it difficult to leave their children to attend an in-person group.

I hope you find the article helpful.

<https://generations.asaging.org/empowering-grandparent-caregivers>

Thank you for your time,
Carole cox

Carole Cox, MSW, Ph.D
Professor
Graduate School of Social Service
Fulbright Scholar, Cyprus
IAGG Representative to the United Nations
Fordham University
113 West 60th Street
New York, New York 10023

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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I represent: Lenox Hill Neighborhood House

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I represent: NYC Aging

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I represent: Deputy Commissioner, External

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I represent: Rose of Sharon Enterprises

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