



250 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Suite 350
Washington, DC 20001
T 202.467.4900 • F 202.467.4949
www.childrenslawcenter.org

Testimony Before the District of Columbia Council
Committee on Youth Affairs
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Public Hearing:

B26-0398 - Increasing Support for Grandparent and Close Relative Caregivers
Amendment Act of 2025

B26-0406 - Streamlining Services for Children Amendment Act of 2025

B26-0409 - Empowering Parents in CFSA Investigations Amendment Act of 2025

Leah Castelaz
Senior Policy Attorney
Children's Law Center

Introduction

Good morning, Chairperson Parker, and members of the Committee. My name is Leah Castelaz. I am a Senior Policy Attorney at Children's Law Center and a resident of the District. Children's Law Center believes every child should grow up with a strong foundation of family, health and education and live in a world free from poverty, trauma, racism and other forms of oppression. Our more than 100 staff – together with DC children and families, community partners and pro bono attorneys – use the law to solve children's urgent problems today and improve the systems that will affect their lives tomorrow. Since our founding in 1996, we have reached more than 50,000 children and families directly and multiplied our impact by advocating for city-wide solutions that benefit hundreds of thousands more.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on B26-0406 - Streamlining Services for Children Amendment Act of 2025, B26-0398 - Increasing Support for Grandparent and Close Relative Caregivers Amendment Act of 2025, and B26-0409 - Empowering Parents in CFSA Investigations Amendment Act of 2025. My colleague, Chris Gamble, will testify on B26-0412 - Child Abuse Investigation Multidisciplinary Team Certification Amendment Act of 2025.

Each year, Children's Law Center attorneys serve as guardians-ad-litem for several hundred children in foster care and protective supervision – over half of all children in the care and custody of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). As a

result, we see firsthand how children and families who are involved in the child welfare system are subject to power imbalance, lack critical information, and struggle to have their needs met by CFSA and its sister agencies.¹ Failure to meet these needs in turn causes and prolongs family instability and undermines children's ability to thrive and reach their full potential.

Therefore, we are glad to testify today on these three bills which work towards strengthening interagency coordination, better meeting the needs of children and families with critical financial support, and supporting parents with information that will help to rebalance the power dynamics in the child welfare system. Attention to the issues that underlie each of these bills is critical, especially for children and families whose needs are so often overlooked. Children's Law Center supports the intent behind each of these bills.

My testimony today will focus on implementation of these bills. First, I will discuss how the District could leverage existing resources – Office of the Ombudsperson, the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, and LinkU – to accomplish the goals of the Streamlining Services Act and ensure interagency coordination that leads to meaningful action and accountability for District children and families. I will then discuss our support of the Increasing Support for Grandparent and Close Relative Caregivers Amendment Act of 2025, and the Empowering Parents in CFSA Investigations Amendment Act of 2025 while also raising some questions that we hope the agency and Committee will consider around implementation of both bills.

The Goals of the Streamlining Services Act are Better Served by Strengthening Existing District Entities and Mechanisms

Under the Streamlining Services Act, the proposed District Office for Children would be required to (1) convene, organize, and staff the Interagency Council for Children, (2) develop a coordinated, centralized website for District families with children, (3) advise the Mayor on policies related to well-being including economic mobility, (4) promote values, policies, and practices that advance the well-being of District's children and families, (5) leverage federal initiatives, and (6) submit an annual report with recommendations for streamlining services, and assessing the progress of the Interagency Council for Children, and (7) engage with the District Youth Council.² We understand and appreciate the intent behind the Streamlining Services Act but ultimately, we believe the goals of this legislation could be served through existing entities and mechanisms in the District.

The District Should Leverage the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children to Overcome the Challenges of Interagency Coordination and to Ensure Accountability

Children's Law Center understands the motivation that underlies of the Streamlining Services Act desire to create an interagency council. The District needs to have clearly coordinated efforts to ensure children and families are getting the resources, support, and services they need to thrive. We have testified to this exact point across numerous agencies and work streams – citing the difficulties of navigating complex health, economic, and education systems and ensuring collaboration.³ The District has

made efforts to address interagency coordination across a variety of issue areas. Children's Law Center currently participates in many of those efforts including several Advisory Committees, Task Forces, Interagency Councils, and Coordinating Councils covering education, homelessness, school-based behavioral health, and child welfare.⁴

These efforts have been immensely worthwhile, and we appreciate the investment that the Council, government agencies, and community partners have made to try to make interagency coordination work. While we see the utility of these interagency spaces, we also know the difficulty of operating cross-government collaboration.

One of the main challenges we have seen is the struggle to carryover the priorities and action items identified in interagency spaces to the practices of individual agencies. The District agencies continue to operate in silos despite the numerous spaces created to break down those silos. In our experience, there must be more than a requirement for agencies to meet. If the District wants to see actual impact and outcomes from interagency coordination there must be a mechanism in place to hold the agencies accountable to ensure the priorities identified are carried over into agency practice, policy, and implementation.

Therefore, we appreciate the proposal to create the District Office for Children as the entity to convene and hold the interagency council accountable. However, we have a few concerns about the proposed legislation. First and foremost, the District Office for Children cannot exist within CFSA.

For many years, CFSA has worked within the confines of its primary purpose to try to support families without removing children – through service referrals, in-home cases, informal family or kin placements, etc.⁵ But ultimately, when a parent is unable to meet the needs of their child, CFSA’s role is to take custody of that child until that parent can prove they are able to meet the child’s needs – and if the parent can’t achieve that within a prescribed window of time, then CFSA’s job is to find another permanent home for that child.⁶

Placing the District Office for Children within CFSA requires the agency to further expand their scope and their reach – moving them further from the intent and purpose of the agency. Placing the District Office for Children continues to place the burden on an already burdened agency. Moreover, we must recognize the deep punitive, racist history of the child welfare system and the lack of trust that families may have in CFSA – placing an office trying to build community trust, create connections, and ensure the well-being of children within that system is not the right choice.⁷

If the District were to create an Office for Children, it would need to be a standalone agency outside the child welfare agency or any other established government agency – similar to what other jurisdictions have done – to support a more neutral, independent approach and allow for a broader scope.⁸

However, we have some concerns about the creation of a standalone Executive agency. Specifically, a standalone Executive agency would not provide the level of

independence intended by the proposed Streamlining Services Act. Many of the challenges and frustrations of interagency coordination are rooted in a lack of transparency and communication from Executive agencies. By creating another Executive agency, we would likely perpetuate the frustrations we already have across interagency coordination.

To achieve the true goals of the Streamlining Services Act, we believe the District should leverage the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC) to run the Interagency Council for Children. The OFC's core functions – effective oversight, systemic trend analysis, interagency coordination, and investigation and day-to-day problem solving – the OFC is uniquely positioned to achieve the Act's objectives.

Specifically, OFC is already required to think systemically about the governmental agencies' roles in the lives of DC families and children, address interagency coordination, and build relationships with all agencies involved in the District's child welfare system.⁹ The work of OFC requires the Office to look beyond CFSA. DC's child welfare system encompasses the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), Department on Disability Services (DDS), Department of Health (DC Health), District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA), Department of Human Services (DHS), the Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF), the Office of the Superintendent of Education (OSSE), District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), the

Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD).

Moreover, OFC's position as an independent legislative entity means there is direct reporting to the Council without reliance on the Executive. If the Council were to create a new agency to serve as the District Office for Children, it would report to the Executive with oversight from the Council. By leveraging the Office of the Ombudsperson, the Council has a direct line to engage on these issues through this legislative Office and does not have to rely on the Executive.

The District Should Leverage Existing Entities to be the Interagency Council for Children

Moreover, instead of creating a new Interagency Council for Children, we believe the District could strengthen the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect (MACCAN). MACCAN's purpose is to advise the Mayor on the full continuum of child welfare services in the District—spanning prevention, early intervention, treatment, and permanency options such as reunification, guardianship, kinship care, and adoption—and to recommend strategies for improving coordination among the public agencies that provide these services. The Committee is made up of 11 non-governmental members and representatives from OFC, CFSA, DBH, DYRS, DHS, DDS, DC Health, MPD, OAG, DC Superior Court Family Court Division, DCPS, and OSSE.

The make-up and the goals of MACCAN overlap significantly with the creation of the Interagency Council for Children. The proposed Interagency Council for Children

prescribes more specific responsibilities than MACCAN currently has, such as coordinating District policies and programs to reduce truancy and address child poverty; aligning youth workforce development, internships, and training; ensuring agencies provide consistent support for students with disabilities and youth involved in the justice and child welfare systems; and establishing best practices to leverage federal initiatives for children and families.

The Interagency Council's detailed provisions are commendable and address critical gaps in our current systems. However, rather than creating a new body to advance these goals, we urge the Committee to consider strengthening and expanding MACCAN. While we recognize that MACCAN's current scope does not fully align with the Council's mandate, maintaining both entities could lead to duplication. We also acknowledge that MACCAN requires significant improvements to fulfill this role and welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Committee to make that happen.

The District Should Leverage LinkU to Support the Development of a Coordinated, Centralized Website for District Youth and Families

The Streamlining Services also requires the District Office for Children to develop a coordinated, centralized website for District families with children. We believe this goal can be achieved through the existing LinkU platform. Thanks to your leadership and funding Councilmember Parker, the District is already expanding the functions of LinkU.¹⁰ LinkU supports the District's 211 Warmline,¹¹ which is striving to create a unified social services network to support residents with centralized access to resources

and referrals.¹² When DC Residents calls the 211 Warmline, staff use LinkU to navigate resources and ensure closed-loop referrals to District services.¹³

Therefore, LinkU is well positioned to advance this component of the Streamlining Services Act. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee, CFSA, DC Health, and other relevant stakeholders on how we can continue to strengthen LinkU in efforts to coordinate, centralize and improve navigation of services for children and families in the District.

Increased Support for Grandparent and Close Relative Caregiver Strengthens Families

Children's Law Center has been a longtime supporter of both the Grandparent Caregivers and the Close Relative Caregiver programs. These programs include the Grandparent Caregivers Program (GCP), which offers a monthly subsidy for low-income residents who are raising their grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-nieces, or great-nephews.¹⁴ Additionally, CFSA, through the Close Relative Caregiver Pilot Program (CRCP), provides a monthly subsidy to low-income residents who are raising their siblings, nieces, nephews, and cousins.¹⁵ The number of children and families these programs serve makes it clear there is a need for these subsidies. In FY24 there were 519 grandparents supporting 823 children in the GCP.¹⁶ As for the CRCP, there were 85 close relatives supporting 120 children.¹⁷ These programs are essential supports to keep DC families together and allow children to remain in homes of kin without formal system involvement.

Children's Law Center has over the years testified to ensure sufficient funding for these programs.¹⁸ Given the ever-changing landscape of economic support like SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, ensuring caregivers have adequate access to financial supports is essential to keeping children unnecessarily out of the child welfare system. Therefore, we are supportive of B26-0398 – Increasing Support for Grandparent and Close Relative Caregivers Amendment Act of 2025 which will increase the rate of subsidy provided to grandparents and closes relative caregivers and ensure it is annually adjusted for inflation.

The Act also raises the qualifying age for dependents from 18 to 21. We have questions about how this change will be implemented. For example, the programs require youth to live with relative caregivers. For many 18- to 21-year-olds, they may live independently while still relying on support from their caregiver. Will CFSA amend their policy to allow for this flexibility or will the youth still be required to live at home. Another implementation question is how CFSA will navigate benefit considerations for older youth. At age 18, individuals may qualify for TANF, and currently, the caregiver subsidy is offset by TANF benefits. How will the agency navigate this reality – will youth receiving benefits independently of the caregiver be factored in or will they not be considered. Therefore, some adjustments may be needed to ensure the program works effectively with the higher age limit. We urge the Committee to work closely with CFSA

to address these considerations, and others that may arise, to ensure smooth implementation so caregivers receive the support they need.

The Empowering Parents in CFSA Investigations Needs Clarification to Practice and Policy Are Aligned

B26-0409 - Empowering Parents in CFSA Investigations Amendment Act of 2025 requires CFSA to inform, at the initiation of an investigation, caretakers of any legal resources available to the caretaker, the availability of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children as a resource for complaints, and their right to counsel during critical stages of neglect proceedings.¹⁹ We agree with the intent behind this legislation – to ensure parents have critical information and resources during traumatic, overwhelming, confusing events like an investigation or a neglect proceeding.²⁰ Although CFSA has made significant efforts in recent years to focus on prevention services that aim to keep families together and avoid removals whenever possible, the fact remains that families involved with DC’s child welfare system are facing the possibility that their children may be taken away from them. This is a terrifying prospect that inevitably creates a significant power imbalance between CFSA and the families it serves.

We understand that CFSA already has materials designed to educate parents about the investigations process including *CFSA’s Child Protective Service Investigations: A Guide for Parents* and CFSA’s website “*When Child Welfare Investigates Your Family*.” We would ask this Committee to engage with CFSA how they currently implement these resources and identify if there are ways to improve that implementation. For example,

are providing these resources already codified or in CFSA policy? When does a CPS worker give the brochure to the family? How does the CPS worker navigate questions? What is the training to the CPS worker to support a family during an investigation – is there another entity that may be able to be there to provide support to a family, someone like a peer support worker or a community health worker?

In our review of CFSA's materials for CPS investigations, the agency does an adequate job of walking through questions a parent may have during an investigation and identifying the applicable rights. We do believe, and as is recommended by this bill, the brochure should be updated to include information about the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children with specifics on their role and how to file a complaint.²¹

We appreciate the Committee engaging with the agency to understand how best to ensure parents and caregivers have robust, accessible information to navigate the trauma of a CPS investigation and potentially the removal of a child. We support any opportunity to ensure there is sufficient support for parents to navigate the process but caution against the overpromise of legal resources or rights to an attorney when not applicable. Finally, we believe, as highlighted by this legislation, OFC is an excellent resource for parents and caregivers to hold CFSA accountable and try to rebalance some of the power in this dynamic by families with a safe, independent place to get information and raise concerns.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I welcome any questions the Committee may have.

¹ For example, our clients and their families frequently experience excessive delays in accessing appropriate behavioral health services, face unmet educational needs, and struggle to find affordable, suitable housing. *See* Leah Castelaz, Children’s Law Center’s Testimony before DC Council Committee on Health, (July 11, 2024), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/L.-Castelaz_Testimony-before-the-Committee-on-Health_B25-0759-Child-Behavioral-Health-Services-Dashboard-Act-of-2024_July-11.pdf.

² B26-0406 - Streamlining Services for Children Amendment Act of 2025.

³ D.C. Law 25-154. Child Behavioral Health Services Dashboard Amendment Act of 2024.

⁴ Interagency Council on Homelessness, Everyday Counts, Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, and Coordinating Council on School Behavioral Health.

⁵ Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 25, 2021), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/TWeerasinghaCote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-25-2021-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 27, 2022), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_ChildrensLaw-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-17-2022-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Sharra E. Greer, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 24, 2023), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Sharra-E.-Greer_Childrens-LawCenter_Performance-Oversight_FY2022-23-CFSA_final.pdf. *See also* Child and Family Services Agency, Program In-Home Services, (May 27, 2022), *available at*: <https://cfsa.dc.gov/publication/program-homeservices#:~:text=It%20is%20CFSA%20policy%20to,to%20promote%20family%20well%2Dbeing>.

⁶ Child and Family Services, Permanency Practice, (May 19, 2020), *available at*: https://cfsa.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/cfsa/publication/attachments/Permanency_Practice_Policy_FINAL%20%282%29_0.pdf; DC Code Title 16, Chapter 23. Family Division [Family Court] Proceedings; DC Code Title 4. Public Care Systems, Chapter 12. Child Abuse and Neglect. Subchapter I. Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Part C. Child and Family Services Agency § 4–1303.03. Duties and powers of the Director; Public Law 105–89. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA).

⁷ Dorothy Roberts: The Punitive History of Child Welfare Services, (March 18, 2024), *available at*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqrQ53VxH20>; Bryan Samuels, *Addressing Systemic Racism in Our Child Welfare System*, The Imprint, (September 15, 2020), *available at*: <https://imprintnews.org/opinion/addressing-systemic-racism-in-our-child-welfare-system/47430>; RACIAL (IN)JUSTICE IN THE U.S. CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM, (July 2022), *available at*: <https://www.childrensrights.org/wp-content/uploads/imported-files/Childrens-Rights-2022-UN-CERD-Report-FINAL.pdf>;

⁸ In our research, we were able to find example from Maryland of a separate office for children – specifically, Maryland’s Governor’s Office for Children. The Office was placed under the Office of the Lieutenant Governor. Helps State and local government agencies and organizations assist young people effectively and economically. To provide care through early intervention, prevention, and community services, priority is given to children and families most vulnerable to abuse, neglect, substance abuse, failure at school, family disintegration, and other problems. In meeting such needs, advice on local resources and priorities comes to the Special Secretary from child advocacy groups and parents. The Office also informs families and the general public about programs and services for youth. See <https://goc.maryland.gov/Pages/home.aspx>; <https://2002mdmanual.msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/08conoff/html/07chf.html>. A recent article from CAP, found a number of states have moved to consolidate disparately administered early childhood programs into a single agency to improve coordination of services and reduce administrative burdens. Much of this work focused on consolidating programming under one agency – slightly different then what is proposed in the Streamlining Services Act but could be used to inform how consolidation may or may not make sense with what is proposed in the Act. See Anna Lovejoy, et. al., *States Seek to Improve Early Childhood Outcomes Through Consolidated Governance Structures*, CAP, (January 6, 2025), available at: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/states-seek-to-improve-early-childhood-outcomes-through-consolidated-governance-structures/>. The Act focuses less on programming and more on coordination. For coordination purposes, we did notice that several states leveraged independent and autonomous Ombudsman offices to support interagency coordination. For example, Colorado’s Ombudsman is required legislatively to “support and facilitate interagency coordination.” See NCSL, *Children’s Ombudsman Offices | Office of the Child Advocate*, (May 25, 2023), available at: <https://www.ncsl.org/human-services/childrens-ombudsman-offices-dup#:~:text=Non%2DIndependent%20Children's%20Ombudsman%20office,of%20the%20agency%20they%20oversee>. See also Megan Conn, *In Quest to Meet Needs of Foster Youth, More States Create Independent Ombuds Offices*, The Imprint, (July 26, 2021), available at: <https://imprintnews.org/foster-care/states-create-independent-ombuds-offices/57239>. We can also look to the work done with the Center for Health Care Strategies, in partnership with Casey Family programs. Specifically, the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) has identified promising cross-system collaborations that support integrated prevention planning and implementation and focus increasingly on upstream approaches. Together, they illustrate how child protection agencies and their partners are working to develop comprehensive systems that meet families’ needs, prevent foster care placement, and support community health and well-being. For more information, see the detailed jurisdictional profiles: [California](#), [Kentucky](#), [New Jersey](#), [Ohio](#), and [Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community](#). These efforts were tailored to child welfare but in analyzing what the different jurisdictions did would be helpful to understand keep elements for interagency coordination – by identifying leaders and champions, create collaborative structures that support communication, facilitate information-sharing to track progress and improve quality, and coordinate and align funding. Ultimately, the structures of DC vary so drastically from the structures of other jurisdictions it’s difficult to pull in an exact replication but from our analysis we have identified that there must be a convener and someone to hold government entities accountable for the actions they say they are going to take. It appeared the jurisdictions in the Casey Family and CHCS program leveraged existing entities to do the work of coordination. See Casey Family Programs, *How can child protection agencies collaborate to prevent foster care and support family well-being?*, (April 24, 2024), available at: <https://www.casey.org/prevention-collab-overview/>.

State	Relevant Office for Interagency Coordination
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Maryland	Governor's Office for Children
California	Child Welfare Council
Kentucky	The State Interagency Council – there are also 18 Regional Interagency Councils.
New Jersey	New Jersey Youth Council within the Office of Family Voice located within the State of New Jersey Department of Children and Families
Ohio	Ohio Family and Children First located within the Department of Children & Youth
Colorado	Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman
Connecticut	Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate
Georgia	Office of the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children
Indiana	Indiana Department of Child Services Ombudsman Bureau
Maine	Maine Child Welfare Services Ombudsman
Massachusetts	Massachusetts Office of the Child Advocate
New Hampshire	New Hampshire Office of the Child Advocate
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Office of the Child Advocate
South Carolina	The South Carolina State Child Advocate and Dept of Children's Advocacy
Tennessee	Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth's (TCCY) Ombudsman Program
Washington	Washington State Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman
West Virginia	Foster Care Ombudsman

⁹ D.C. Law 23-270. Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020.

¹⁰ D.C. Law 25-154. Child Behavioral Health Services Dashboard Amendment Act of 2024; FY2026, DC Health Budget, District's Approved Budget Enhance, E-53.

¹¹ 211 Warmline, *available at*: <https://211warmline.dc.gov/page/about-211-Warmline>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ FY2025 CFSA Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q89, *available at*: <https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698>.

¹⁴ CFSA, Grandparent Caregivers Program, *available at*: <https://cfsa.dc.gov/publication/programgrandparent-caregivers-program>.

¹⁵ CFSA, Close Relative Caregiver Pilot Program, *available at*: <https://cfsa.dc.gov/publication/ai-closerelative-caregiver-pilot-program>.

¹⁶ FY2025 CFSA Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q156, *available at*: <https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698>.

¹⁷ FY2025 CFSA Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q157, *available at*: <https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698>.

¹⁸ Tami Weerasingha-Cote, Children's Law Center Testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (December 9, 2021), *available at*: <https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp->

[content/uploads/2021/12/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-December-9-2021-Grandparent-and-Close-Relative-Caregiver-Amendment-2021_FinalX.pdf](https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-December-9-2021-Grandparent-and-Close-Relative-Caregiver-Amendment-2021_FinalX.pdf); Damon King, Children's Law Center Testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services and Health, (June 24, 2015), *available at*: <https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CLC-Testimony-Grandparent-Caregivers-Program-Relative-Subsidy-Transfer-Amendment-Act-of-2015.pdf>; WAMU: D.C. Council Should Support Grandparent Caregiver Program, (December 12, 2012), *available at*: <https://childrenslawcenter.org/news/wamu-dc-council-should-support-grandparent-caregiver-program/>; Sharra E. Greer, Children's Law Center Testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (November 19, 2012), *available at*: <https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/files/clc/111912%20Testimony-Gparent%20Caregiver%20Expansion.pdf>.

¹⁹ B26-0409 - Empowering Parents in CFSA Investigations Amendment Act of 2025.

²⁰ Child welfare investigations are notably traumatizing for families and children due to their invasive and frightening nature. These investigations frequently include in-depth searches of the family's home, solicitation of medical data, questioning about history of mental health challenges and substance use, and even involve highly invasive physical searches of the children. The families are often provided little information about the reason and manner of investigation, the scope of the power available to the worker, and are often uninformed about their rights to speak to an attorney, refuse entry, or refuse to submit to questioning and searches. *See* Annie E. Casey Foundation, *How does Investigation, removal, and placement cause trauma for children?*, *available at*: https://www.casey.org/media/SC_Investigation-removal-placement-causes-trauma.pdf; Merritt DH. Documenting experiences and interactions with Child Protective Services. *Focus (Madison)*. 2021 Sep;37(2):3-10. PMID: 38076721; PMCID: PMC10701339.

²¹ B26-0409 - Empowering Parents in CFSA Investigations Amendment Act of 2025.