

National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness

Seneca Family of Agencies: A Non-Profit Agency for Children & Families
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PERMANENCY BLAST

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April 26, 2013

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Senate Hearing on Family Finding and Child Welfare

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Dear Permanency Warriors,

This week, the U.S. Senate Finance Committee conducted a hearing to learn of cutting-edge practices resulting from the advent of the Fostering Connections to Success Act, while soliciting ideas for policy, practice and legislative improvements. This hearing is one of the steps the Finance Committee is taking to consider reauthorizing and approving the Adoption Incentives Program and Fostering Connections grants.

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The Senate Testimony

Antwone Fisher began the testimony by sharing the powerful and troubling story of his childhood experience in foster care in the 60s and 70s. Mr. Fisher also spoke to his struggles and challenges after exiting foster care with no family or connections and of the powerful impact the pursuit of finding his family had on his life both personally and professionally. Mr. Fisher's story points to the devastating effects of the absence of family and loved ones for children in care. (To learn more of his story, including his autobiographical movie and memoir, click [here](#)).

Kevin Campbell was one of three experts in the field along with Gary Stangler of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and Eric Fenner of Casey Family Programs who were invited to testify for the committee. They spoke on the evolution of cutting-edge practices to involve family members urgently in the life of children who enter care. This testimony was one of the first steps taken by the committee in hopes of preventing stories like Mr. Fisher's from reoccurring and obtaining recommendations to improve policy, practice and legislation.

Here is just a sample of Kevin's compelling testimony:

"Given the importance of the mandated notification process, the question becomes what happens to family members and caring adults who are notified and immediately respond to the urgent need of children entering care. The cutting edge practices that engage families to actively participate in the decision making and support of their kin have dramatically improved the well-being and permanency outcomes of children who have come to the attention of child welfare services. Efforts like those in San Francisco, Oregon, and Minnesota are leveraging Family Connections grants to refine, measure and test innovative, front-end practices that will help us further understand the full potential of this work to inform the field. Unfortunately, these practices are too infrequently available or unevenly implemented for families in need, thus squandering the opportunities created by The Fostering Connections to Success Act in far too many communities."

Click [here](#) Kevin Campbell's complete testimony. You can also view the full video recording of the hearing, and read other witness testimonies and member statements [here](#).

Opportunity for Urgent Action - Submit a Statement in Response to the Hearing

Those of you interested in and passionate about the continuation of the Adoption Incentives Program and Fostering Connections grants have the opportunity to contribute to the dialogue of the Senate Finance Committee. Interested parties can submit recommendations to impact the information base and perceptions of the finance committee staff and members. The committee will no doubt take note of the number and quality of statements submitted. Please use this opportunity to bring further awareness and attention to these issues at this critical time. **The deadline for submissions is May 6th!**

Here are the instructions for submitting a statement for the record:

- The statement should be a typewritten, single-spaced, and not exceeding 10 pages in length.
- Title and date of the hearing, and the full name and address of the individual or organization must appear on the first page of the statement.
- Statements must be received no later than two weeks following the conclusion of the hearing.
- Statements should be **faxed to (202) 228-0554, Attn. Editorial and Document Section** (note: this is different from what is stated on the committee's website. We have spoken with the committee who informed us the rules have recently changed due to security concerns.)

Thank you for your interest and attention. We will keep you apprised of any further developments we learn from the committee and its staff. Please send any questions or comments to familyfinding@senecacenter.org or call us at (510) 654-4004 x2238

Sincerely,

Bob Friend

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