To: Honorable Members of the House Children & Youth Committee  
Date: June 5, 2023  
Subject: House Bill 1058 (Krajewski)

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children and Community Legal Services of Philadelphia work together to advocate for child welfare in the Commonwealth. We collectively and strongly encourage you to support House Bill 1058 (Krajewski) when it comes before the House Children & Youth Committee for consideration on June 7, 2023. As advocates of Kinship Care for youth in Pennsylvania, we believe this bill would strengthen support systems for young people in the child welfare system.

Although Pennsylvania law requires that agencies first seek to place children who must be separated from their parents with kinship care providers, in Pennsylvania children are more likely to be placed with strangers than with someone they know and love, with only 42% of children entering care being placed in a kinship home. Although in some instances potential kinship caregivers are not qualified to provide care, our rates of kinship care in addition to the testimonials of families tell us that across the Commonwealth, caring relatives and other kinship resources are turned away by child welfare agencies despite their qualifications for reasons of implicit bias, family poverty, or undue bureaucracy and red tape.

House Bill 1058 would allow kinship caregivers to provide testimony to courts during child dependency proceedings; the testimony provided will allow the courts to consider the appropriateness of a kin caregiver to care for a child placed through the child welfare system when they may have been denied by the county agency. Currently, informal kin caregivers have no right to share their opinion on what is best for a child during hearings unless they are formally licensed foster parents and provide care for the child. House Bill 1058 would remedy this situation and provide important perspective to courts that make child welfare decisions. This bill is also narrowly tailored in that it would not give standing to potential kinship care providers, but it would instead allow them to be heard by a judge solely on the issue of their qualification to provide kinship care. This would allow for an independent judicial analysis of whether the agency’s reasons for disqualification are appropriate and serve the best interests of the individual child.

We appreciate your consideration and if you have any further questions please feel free to contact Kati Brillhart, Government Affairs Director at Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, at kbrillhart@papartnerships.org.