

*Massachusetts Commission on the Status of
Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*

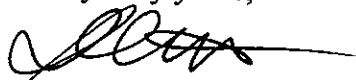
March 11, 2018

Mr. William F. Welch
Clerk of the Senate
State House, Room 335
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Mr. Welch,

Herein please find the ninth annual report of the Commission on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren submitted in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 3, section 69(h).

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ilene Mitchell', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ilene Mitchell, Chair
Commission on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

***Massachusetts Commission on the Status of
Grandparents Raising Grandchildren***

March 11, 2018

The Honorable Charles D. Baker, Jr.
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker,

Herein, please find the ninth annual report of the Commission on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren for the calendar year 2017, submitted in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 3, section 69(a).

In 2017, the Commission's ability to carry out its statutory responsibility of assisting grandparents raising grandchildren continued to expand because the continued funding for the Commission allowed us to retain our Director, Colleen Pritoni. The funding we receive has allowed us to increase our support and outreach to grandparents, and also to agencies that can provide assistance to grandparents raising grandchildren. This appropriation has been put to good use, thus verifying the understanding shown by the Administration and the Legislature of the important work being done by the Commission on behalf of grandparents and other caregivers who take the emotional and financial responsibility of raising their grandchildren and other kin. The opioid crisis has increased the number of children being raised by grandparents and other relatives. With sustained financial support, we will continue our work advocating for and providing resources to these caretakers, whose love and support and provide a stable and safe home for thousands of children in Massachusetts.

This report details some of the work the Commission accomplished in 2017.

Our work is in these major areas:

- Support Groups and Community Outreach
- Information and Referral
- Legal Information and Advocacy

We organized the following events:

- Regional workshops for support group leaders, grandparents, and community service providers. We held six workshops in communities from Northampton to Hyannis.
- In June, over 200 grandparents and providers took part in the Commission's annual conference with a keynote address by children's book author, Jarrett Krosoczka, who was raised in Worcester by his grandparents. Feedback from the conference included comments such as: "Fantastic Day", "This was a great opportunity to meet other grandparents raising grandchildren", "the outreach is great-so many people attended this year."
- We held our second "Agency Summit" at the John Adams Courthouse to exchange ideas and information on how agencies can collaborate to serve grandparents and other caregivers. Representatives attended from the Departments of Children and Families, Mental Health, Public Health, Transitional Assistance, Elder Affairs, Youth Services, MassHealth, and the Mass Commission for the Blind.
- Our Director and Commission members participated in dozens of meetings and workshops with state agencies and non-profit service providers. Examples of these are:
 - Quincy WIC staff meeting
 - Taunton Senior Center Workshop on Elder Mental Health
 - Department of Early Education and Care-advocacy for child care vouchers for grandparents raising grandchildren
 - Family Resource Centers Statewide Meeting

To promote the Commission and connect with Grandparents and other kin raising grandchildren we revamped our website and we send out newsletters three times a year. You can visit the website at www.massgrg.com. On the website we post many resources ranging from information about our support groups to information about legal issues for grandparents. The Commission receives many inquiries for information and advice.

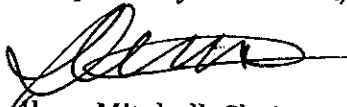
Many grandparents have to become the legal guardians of their grandchildren in court. Recent cases from the Supreme Judicial Court have provided indigent parents with the right to counsel in these cases, but grandparents do not always have the same right. With the support of Representative Paul Donato, a Commission member, a bill is under consideration in the current legislative term that will provide legal assistance to low income grandparent caregivers in certain circumstances when they are involved in a legal guardianship case.

The makeup of the Commission changed in 2017 as we welcomed several new Commissioners:

- Deborah Dowd-Fowley, a Licensed Social Worker who has been a Caregiver Specialist with the Family Caregiver Support Program since 2011 at Elder Services of Worcester Area, Inc.
- Abigail Taylor, J.D., M.A., the Director of the Child and Youth Protection Unit (CYPU) in the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
- Carole Ann Butze, formerly Director of Nurses for Billerica Public Schools, currently an instructor for the Shawsheen Valley Practical Nurse Program

In conclusion, 2017 was an extraordinarily active and productive year due in large part to the leadership and direction provided by our Director, Colleen Pritoni, and the support and assistance we receive from our fiscal agent, the Department of Children and Families. We thank DCF Commissioner Linda Spears for her support and contributions to the work of the Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ilene Mitchell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ilene Mitchell, Chair

Commission on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren