



**State of Florida**  
**Department of Children and Families**

**Rick Scott**  
*Governor*

**David E. Wilkins**  
*Secretary*

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May 24, 2013

Dear Foster Parents and Residential Group Care Providers:

What a year for legislation benefiting children in out-of-home care!

This year, Gov. Rick Scott signed into law the “Quality Parenting for Children in Foster Care Act” and is expected to soon sign into law the “Nancy C. Detert Common Sense and Compassion Independent Living Act.” In a nutshell, these two landmark pieces of legislation focus on ensuring children who have been sheltered from unsafe homes have the opportunity to experience a childhood that is as normal and promising as possible and an adulthood that is as productive and fulfilling as possible.

The Governor dubbed the “Quality Parenting for Children in Foster Care Act” the “Letting kids be kids” law. That legislation was informed by your voices as caregivers of foster children and members of the Fostering Florida’s Future task force ([www.fosteringflorida.com](http://www.fosteringflorida.com)). The changes enshrined in that law are aimed at enabling you to truly parent the children you have welcomed into your home and hearts. The Independent Living Act extends foster care in Florida to age 21 and redesigns the program that supports young adults through high school and into postsecondary educational institutions and careers.

You have a tremendous role in helping this state effectively implement the new legislation. Consider inviting other responsible, caring adults in your neighborhood to become foster parents, especially for an older teen. Seek additional support and preparation from the Quality Parenting Initiative (<http://qipiflorida.cbcs.usf.edu>) and your local Foster/Adoptive Parent Association ([www.floridafapa.org](http://www.floridafapa.org)) to better understand the trauma a child in care has experienced and how to respond appropriately. Recruit mentors for children in care from local businesses, faith-based organizations and civic groups.

I want to emphasize key language in both pieces of legislation: the “reasonable and prudent parent standard.” When determining whether to allow a child in out-of-home care to participate in extracurricular, enrichment and social activities, you are empowered and entrusted to make “careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the child’s health, safety, and best interests while at the same time encouraging the child’s emotional and developmental growth.”

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1317 Winewood Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

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If you have questions about the legislation, please contact your local Community-Based Care lead agency, the Child Placing Agency that licensed you as a foster parent or your local Foster and Adoptive Parents Association.

The rest of the country is watching Florida and applauding our "Normalcy" initiatives. On May 9, my wife, Tanya, and I had the privilege of testifying before a subcommittee of the U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means in Washington, D.C. That hearing, before the Human Resources Subcommittee, was recorded and is available online at: [http://waysandmeans.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view\\_id=2](http://waysandmeans.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=2). You also may read the written testimony of the witnesses who testified at the "Letting Kids Be Kids: Balancing Safety with Opportunity for Foster Youth" hearing: <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=332391>.

Thank you for making a difference for a vulnerable child. Please be assured that your commitment to helping a young person live a better life matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Wilkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David E. Wilkins  
Secretary