

SENATE WOMEN'S ISSUES, CHILDREN AND FAMILY
SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 494

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 14, 1996

The Senate Women's Issues, Children and Family Services Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 494.

This bill requires the Commissioner of Human Services to provide funding to five counties on a pilot basis to establish broad-based community coalitions to address the needs and concerns of grandparents raising their grandchildren. The counties to be funded are as follows: Atlantic, Essex, Mercer, Middlesex and Monmouth. Each coalition will be comprised of 11 members who will be appointed by the county governing body. The members will represent community agencies, law enforcement, the courts and the fields of health, housing, child care, substance abuse and education. Grandparents raising their grandchildren will also be included as members.

The goals of the community coalitions will be to: identify the needs of grandparents raising their grandchildren; match areas of need with an awareness of existing resources; provide a comprehensive resource guide for grandparents based on existing programs and services; and recommend programs and services where they do not exist.

The community coalitions will issue and directly submit an interim and final report of their findings and recommendations to the Commissioner of Human Services as well as to the chairpersons of the Senate Women's Issues, Children and Family Services and the Assembly Community Services Committees. The reports will also be provided to the appropriate county governing body.

The bill provides an appropriation of \$25,000 to the Department of Human Services to provide grants of \$5,000 to each of the five community coalitions. The bill provides that its provisions will expire one year following enactment.

This bill is designed to address the needs and concerns of grandparents raising their grandchildren due to various situations. These situations include unmarried teenage children; children returning home from failed relationships; children who are addicted to alcohol and drugs; children who are incarcerated; and children who have either deserted their families or died due to illnesses such as AIDS.