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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement by Donna Butts, Executive Director

Congress Affirms the Important Role of Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

Washington - Late last week, Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, which was signed into law on March 23, 2018. The bill includes funding for critically important programs for the nearly 2.6 million grandparents raising grandchildren. More than 7 million children are being raised in kinship care, or “grandfamilies,” which are households headed by kin—a grandparent, great-grandparent, uncle, aunt or other relative who is not their birth parent. These grandparents and other relatives step in to provide safe and stable homes to children who cannot remain with their parents. The number of these families has recently increased, a phenomenon attributed to the opioid crisis.

Kinship Navigator Funds: \$20 million will go to states, U.S. territories and tribes to develop and evaluate kinship navigator programs. Navigators help kinship caregivers with vital information as they transition to taking care of a child, including learning about access to health and mental health services, financial and legal assistance, substance abuse prevention and treatment, housing, support groups, and other programs. The intent of this money is to help develop navigator programs in states and localities that do not have them and to help existing programs get the evaluation they need or adapt their programs to meet the evidence-based standards in the Family First Act. Because of Family First, once programs meet these standards they will be able to draw down ongoing federal entitlement funding from Title IV-E of the Social Security Act.

National Family Caregiver Support Program: An additional 20 percent boost of \$30 million for a total of \$180 million for the National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP). The NFCSP provides five critical categories of supportive services to family caregivers of older

individuals, as well as grandparents and other relatives aged 55 and older who are raising children. Written broadly to provide flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of caregivers, these include: Information to caregivers about available services; Assistance to caregivers in gaining access to the services; Individual counseling, organization of support groups, and caregiver training; Respite care; and, Supplemental services, on a limited basis, to complement the care provided by caregivers.

Adoption and Guardianship Incentives Program: \$37 million in additional funds for the Adoption and Guardianship Incentives Program, which recognizes and rewards states for improved performance in ensuring children and youth leave foster care to permanent adoptive and guardianship families, including grandparents and other relatives.

The Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act Passed the Senate by Unanimous Consent: This bill would help these families by providing a one-stop public source of federal information on resources and best practices to help grandparents and other relatives meet the diverse needs of the children in their care, as well as maintain their own physical and mental health and emotional well-being. Furthermore, by creating a federal task force to issue a report to Congress on best practices, resources, and gaps in services, the legislation takes critical steps toward improving the availability and quality of services to help grandfamilies, or kinship families, across the country. Generations United is grateful to Senators Susan Collins and Bob Casey for championing this bipartisan bill.

About Generations United

Generations United is home to the National Center on Grandfamilies, a leading voice for issues affecting families headed by grandparents and other relatives. Generations United's mission is to improve the lives of older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies and programs for the enduring benefit of all. www.gu.org

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