

From: [Ken Alper](#)
To: [Doniece Gott](#)
Subject: FW: Support SB181 Child Placement; Diligent Search
Date: Tuesday, April 02, 2024 9:03:26 AM
Attachments: [1f7e7ebb.png](#)

Support

Ken Alper

Senate Finance Committee Aide
Office of Sen. Donny Olson
465-8163

From: Sen. Donny Olson <Sen.Donny.Olson@akleg.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, April 2, 2024 8:41 AM
To: Ken Alper <Ken.Alper@akleg.gov>
Subject: FW: Support SB181 Child Placement; Diligent Search

From: kmerwin@familyreunionusa.org <kmerwin@familyreunionusa.org>
Sent: Monday, April 1, 2024 5:00 PM
To: Sen. Click Bishop <Sen.Click.Bishop@akleg.gov>; Sen. Lyman Hoffman <Sen.Lyman.Hoffman@akleg.gov>; Sen. Jesse Kiehl <Sen.Jesse.Kiehl@akleg.gov>; Sen. Kelly Merrick <Sen.Kelly.Merrick@akleg.gov>; Sen. Donny Olson <Sen.Donny.Olson@akleg.gov>; Sen. Bert Stedman <Sen.Bert.Stedman@akleg.gov>; Sen. David Wilson <Sen.David.Wilson@akleg.gov>
Subject: Support SB181 Child Placement; Diligent Search



Dear Senate Finance Committee Members,

On behalf of Family Reunion, I am writing to express support for SB181, Child Placement; Diligent Search. Specifically, I would like to highlight the importance of the provision requiring a diligent search of adult family members for placement of children in need of aid.

Ensuring the well-being and stability of children in need of aid should be a top priority for our state's child court system. One crucial aspect of achieving this goal is identifying and considering suitable placement options within the child's extended family or among family friends. Research consistently demonstrates the benefits of maintaining familial and community connections for children in foster care, including improved outcomes in terms of

emotional well-being, educational attainment, and permanency.

The proposed legislation mandates that the Department of Family and Community Services conduct a diligent search for adult family members or family friends who may be appropriate placement options for children in need of aid. This search includes interviewing the child's parents, relatives, and other individuals likely to have information about potential caregivers, as well as conducting comprehensive searches of databases and other resources.

Furthermore, the legislation requires the department to provide written notice to all adult family members identified in the diligent search, informing them of their rights under state law and the procedures for gaining custody of the child. This ensures transparency and allows family members to participate in decisions regarding the care and placement of the child.

By prioritizing placement with adult family members or family friends whenever possible, we can help minimize the trauma and disruption experienced by children entering the foster care system. Additionally, this approach supports the preservation of familial and cultural ties, which are essential for children's sense of identity and belonging.

I urge you to support SB181 and its provisions regarding diligent searches for adult family members in the placement of children in need of aid. By enacting this legislation, we can keep children's best interest front and center.

Respectfully,

Karen Renee Merwin

Director, State Legislative Initiative

Family Reunion USA

<https://familyreunionusa.org>

Family Reunion is a national, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that works with lawmakers, existing organizations, and experts dedicated to making much-needed changes to the family court system so the best interests of children can be supported. We focus on positively influencing family laws and policies that often discount one parent and ultimately harm the children. We believe the best parent is both parents.