

SOUTHERN ARIZONA GRANDPARENT AMBASSADORS

Statement re: Pima County Resolution in Support of Research, Funding, and Expanded Access to Treatment to Address Opioid Dependence and Addiction

My name is Becky Duncan, and I am representing the Southern Arizona Grandparent Ambassadors. We are an advocacy group for the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren and other kinship families. We are speaking in strong support of this resolution.

Opioid addiction of parents is one of the reasons some grandchildren need to be cared for by their grandparents or other kin. If more research-based treatment programs can be made available in the community and within jails and prisons, some of these parents can recover and can care for their children again. If treatment is provided for pregnant women, the child they are carrying has a better chance of being born healthy.

Sentencing reforms and alternatives to incarceration such as drug courts are also valuable approaches which can keep families together and reduce the need for foster care.

The Governor's commitment to working on this issue should be commended. The Legislature and the Governor must now work together to find the funding and to send it to the county for expansion of preventive and treatment services addressing opioid dependence and addiction.

Southern Arizona Grandparent Ambassadors urges approval of this resolution. Thank you.

SOUTHERN ARIZONA GRANDPARENT AMBASSADORS

Statement on Proposed Resolution in Opposition to the Repeal of the Affordable Care Act and to the Enactment of the American Health Care Act

My name is Becky Duncan, and I am representing the Southern Arizona Grandparent Ambassadors. We are an advocacy group for the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren and other kinship families. We are speaking in strong support of this resolution.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has benefitted kinship families in many ways. Most of our grandparents are Medicare recipients. They gained preventive services and relief from the prescription drug coverage gap. Younger grandparents found the ACA policies and provisions gave them access to more comprehensive and less expensive healthcare coverage.

The children in kinship families are typically covered by Medicaid. They have often experienced trauma, loss, neglect or abuse. They especially need help from mental health providers, as well as other services such as dental care and physical exams. These health care provisions are covered by Medicaid. The cuts in Medicaid proposed in the American Health Care Act could mean limiting the numbers of children eligible or the range of services provided. Such changes would deprive these children of essential support needed for positive growth and development.

In closing, let me tell you about one of our grandmas. She took in a young grandson who had experienced abuse and neglect. When she started caring for him, he was quite aggressive and angry. He had periods of rage where he injured her. She wasn't sure she could keep him. She requested mental health services from AHCCCS. With therapy and a special school, within three years he had received the help he needed to be able to go to a regular public school and to live safely and respectfully at home. Quality, comprehensive, affordable healthcare is essential for our families and for the community. ACA provided this. The American Health Care Act does not.

Thank you for proposing this resolution. Congress needs to hear from Pima County.