**Child Welfare Infrastructure**

Increase the salaries for local DSS Family Services Series positions and provide a salary adjustment for current Family Services employees.

**INCLUDED IN GOVERNOR’S BUDGET**

The 2018 JLARC report highlighted that stability of the foster care workforce as a primary challenge. Turnover rates for an entry-level Family Services Worker Specialist is 42%, with retention efforts being an even greater issue in small, rural agencies.

**Increase Child Welfare workforce by adding additional slots for the Child Welfare Stipend Program.**

The Title IV-E Child Welfare Stipend Program is a partnership between the Virginia Department of Social Services and four state universities within Virginia, including Virginia Commonwealth University. This specialized training program prepares social work students for a career in public child welfare.

**Provide Social Supports to Kinship Caregivers**

Expand kinship navigator programs.

**INCLUDED IN GOVERNOR’S BUDGET**

Kinship navigator programs offer help to kinship providers and the public in areas such as financial assistance, legal referrals, education and support groups, basic needs, child care and respite, and outreach and public education.

**Create and fund a Foster Care Prevention Program.**

Promote and support kinship care placements made by local board to keep children out of foster care. The program will include maintenance payments equal to foster care payments for kin placements as well as social supports for the family.

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Child Welfare Infrastructure

Increase parent involvement.

Parent Representation – the legal representation provided to parents of children in foster care in crisis – and Virginia is among the worst states for children aging out of foster care. Studies show when parents have better legal representation, children get out of foster care and find permanent homes faster. A Senate-mandated workgroup made several recommendations to address these problems. We support measures to address the crisis and make system improvements.

Help Foster Care Youth Have Normal Adolescent Experiences

Support driver's license for foster youth.

Help foster youth obtain driver’s licenses and transportation to attend school and to find employment. Support foster youth to obtain a driver's license by providing reimbursements for foster parents, kinship caregivers, and youth in Fostering Futures for their car insurance premiums.