

By Mrs. Gray of Framingham, petition of Barbara E. Gray, Sharon M. Pollard and another relative to establishing a bill of rights for foster children. Human Services and Elderly Affairs.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty.

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR FOSTER CHILDREN.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 To outline the rights inherently belonging to all children in
2 addition, because of the temporary or permanent separation from
3 and loss of parents and other family members, the foster child
4 requires special safeguards, resources, and care.

5 Section I of Chapter 28A of the General Laws is hereby amend-
6 ed by adding the following new subsection 1A:

7 Every foster child has the inherent right: —

8 (1) to be cherished by a family of his own, either his family helped
9 by readily available services and supports to reassume his care, or
10 an adoptive family or by plan, a continuing foster family.

11 (2) to be nurtured by foster parents who have been selected to
12 meet his individual needs and who are provided services and
13 supports, including specialized education, so that they can grow in
14 their ability to enable the child to reach his potential.

15 (3) to receive sensitive, continuing help in understanding and
16 accepting the reasons for his own family's inability to take care of
17 him, and in developing confidence in his own self-worth.

18 (4) to receive continuing loving care and respect as a unique
19 human being — a child growing in trust in himself and others.

20 (5) to grow up in freedom and dignity in a neighborhood of
21 people who accept him with understanding, respect and friendship.

22 (6) to receive help in overcoming deprivation or whatever distor-
23 tion in his emotional, physical, intellectual, social and spiritual
24 growth may have resulted from his early experiences.

25 (7) to receive education, training, and career guidance to prepare
26 him for a useful and satisfying life.

27 (8) to receive preparation for citizenship and parenthood
28 through interaction with foster parents and other adults who are
29 consistent role models.

30 (9) to be represented by an attorney at law in administrative or
31 judicial proceedings with access to fair hearings and court review of
32 decisions, so that his best interests are safeguarded.

33 (10) to receive a high quality of child welfare services, including
34 involvement of the natural parents and his own involvement in
35 major decisions that affect his life.