

*WHEREAS*, families are central to the well-being of our communities, state, nation, and children are the future of society; and

*WHEREAS*, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and other kin are stepping forward in ever-increasing numbers to assume full time parental responsibility for children whose parents are unable to care for and parent their children; and

*WHEREAS*, kinship caregivers provide unparalleled support to ensure better outcomes for children by providing a stable household in which they can receive the nurturing love, affection, care, support and security that will help them thrive and grow into successful and strong adults; and

*WHEREAS*, in Idaho, over 10,297 grandparents care solely for their grandchildren under the age of 18. Thousands of others live in households comprised of other blood and non-blood relatives who have taken on the role as the primary caregiver due to an unforeseen circumstance; and

*WHEREAS*, strong and healthy family relationships are essential for the well-being of children, and it is our responsibility to promote and preserve kinship, sibling and other familial connections for Idaho's youngest citizens; and

*WHEREAS*, the significant care and nurturing of these children by their blood and non-blood relatives deserves to be recognized. The seeds of hope, love and resilience are planted by relatives who generously give of themselves to provide stability for children and they are truly unsung heroes. The Department of Health and Welfare recognizes the critical contributions that these relatives make, and has taken active steps to support them in their efforts. This includes through the implementation of the Families First Executive Order, a newly restructured division with a focus on supporting children and caregivers in foster and kinship care, investing in a platform to locate potential kinship caregivers, streamlining licensing requirements for relative caregivers, enhancements made through the federal Kinship Navigation grant, and serving as the lead agency for the Bridging Systems for Kinship Families project. Idaho is proud to honor and celebrate the children and their grandparents, other relatives, and non-blood relatives who raise them in kinship care and who ensure their safety, promote their well-being and establish a stable, positive family environment for these young people to thrive; and who have opened their hearts and homes to these children and youth.