

September is Kinship Care Month and I want to thank all the relatives and like-family caregivers who step up to help our children when they need it most.

Removing a child from their home is no small matter and we don't take it lightly. Even when it's absolutely necessary for their safety and well-being, removing a child from their home is still a traumatic event in their life.

Going to a stranger, no matter how kind, loving or well-trained, is another source of uncertainty for them. But being placed with someone they know can soften the blow and ease the transition. Whether it's a grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, or older sibling, being placed with a relative (or someone close to the family) has long-term benefits. Siblings can often stay together. Connections to their extended family, culture, and native language can remain intact. They are more likely to have safe yet meaningful visits with their parent, which in turn leads to a greater chance of reunification. And if returning home is not possible, they are more likely to have a permanent family if they are with kin, rather than aging out of foster care.

For the past several years we have placed a high priority on finding kin and supporting them so they can manage the financial, logistical, and emotional stress that can come with taking in children at a moment's notice. After all, if someone called me out of the blue, described a family emergency, and asked me to take in one or more children, it would certainly upend my routine and require some big changes in my life and home.

Yet hundreds of kinship caregivers have answered that call and currently more than 600 children in Cuyahoga County custody are placed with kin. Thank you to each and every one of them. I know it can't be easy, but our children are better because of your love and support.

