

An Act establishing a Foster Parent Bill of Rights

HD 1702 Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier / SD 1432 Sen. Jo Comerford

What problem does this bill address?

Foster, pre-adoptive, and kinship caregivers play a critical, everyday role supporting the 6,000+ children in the care of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The responsibilities of foster parents are made clear through extensive training and formalized in Department of Children & Families' policies and regulations. However, it is equally important for foster parents to have a clear understanding of their rights.

This bill is intended to make the rights of foster parents clear.

What difference will this bill make?

This bill includes several key rights important to foster families, including:

- access to training & resources
- the right to appropriate communication between DCF, courts, and others involved with caring for the child
- the right to be free from all forms of discrimination in carrying out their duties as foster parents
- the ability to exercise rights without fear of repercussions
- establishing a reasonable & prudent parenting standard (a framework designed to help foster parents provide a relatively normal family environment for children)

Why is this bill needed *now*?

There are not enough foster parents in Massachusetts. Recruitment and retention of foster parents is a top priority. A Foster Parent Bill of Rights will help support current caregivers and attract new parents.

This bill is supported by the Massachusetts Alliance for Families, the state-wide foster parent association, and informed by input from foster families across the state.