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Contact:

iCARE Adoptive And Foster Families
info@icare4aaff.org | www.icare4aaff.org

Illinois HB 4536 Advances School Mental Health Policy for Adoptive, Foster, and Kinship Students

Illinois — iCARE Adoptive And Foster Families applauds the introduction of **Illinois House Bill 4536 (HB 4536)**, a meaningful step toward aligning education policy with the real needs of students impacted by early adversity.

HB 4536 updates school mental health and training language to explicitly include **relational and developmental trauma** and, for the first time, **names adoptive, foster, and kinship students directly in education policy**. This change reflects research and lived experience showing that early loss, separation, and disrupted attachment can affect learning, behavior, and emotional regulation in school environments.

“For too long, children from adoptive, foster, and kinship families have been present in every classroom while their experiences were largely invisible in education policy,” said Founder and President, Laura Adams. “HB 4536 begins to close that gap by recognizing that permanency alone does not guarantee healing.”

The legislation strengthens how schools prepare educators and staff to understand and respond to students’ needs—helping ensure support is intentional, informed, and responsive based on adoption competent mental health training and professional development for educators, administrators and support staff.

iCARE works at the intersection of families, schools, and policy to promote **resiliency-oriented, hope-focused** practices that help children feel seen, supported, and equipped to learn. Through initiatives such as **Connection Kits™, Connected We Thrive™ professional development**, and systems consultation, iCARE partners with educators, providers and policymakers to translate research, best practices and lived experience into practical tools and strategies for schools.

“This legislation reflects what becomes possible when family voice, professional insight, and policy align,” iCARE leadership added. “HB 4536 represents progress toward stronger school-family partnerships and learning environments rooted in connection and belonging.”

Learn more about HB 4536 and why it matters for schools and students:

<https://mailchi.mp/icare4aaff/when-policy-catches-up-to-what-kids-need-hb-4536>

iCARE Adoptive And Foster Families is a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating, equipping, and empowering schools, families, professionals, and policymakers to better support adoptive, foster, and kinship children.

When We CONNECT, Children THRIVE™