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LEGACY Housing Bill Introduced to Provide Housing for Grandfamilies

Recognizing the housing needs of the growing numbers of grandparents and other relatives raising over 6 million children in America, Representatives Michael Capuano (D-MA) and Connie Morella (R-MD) today introduced LEGACY (H.R. 4033), a bill to improve access to housing for "grandfamilies" across the United States.

"Grandparents on fixed incomes are taking on the responsibility of raising their grandchildren across the nation. They are not only concerned with the rising costs of prescription drugs, but with the cost of diapers, baby formula and school clothes. The LEGACY Act will help provide new affordable housing opportunities for these unique families," said Representative Capuano who represents the district in Boston that is home to GrandFamilies House, the only housing development in the nation specifically designed for grandparents raising grandchildren.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2.1 million children are being raised by grandparents or other relatives with no parents present. These children come into the care of their grandparent or relatives for a variety of reasons including parental substance abuse, child abuse and/or neglect, poverty, mental health problems, incarceration, and death of a parent. These caregivers conservatively save taxpayers \$4.5 billion per year by keeping these children out of the formal foster care system. Many of these grandparents are prepared for retirement, but not for raising a second family. They take on this responsibility at great personal expense and often with little to no support.

The need for safe and affordable housing ranks high among the challenges facing these families. Unfortunately the nation's housing policies have not kept pace with the unique needs of the growing number of grandfamilies across the nation. As a result some grandparents, living in senior-only housing have been forced to keep these children inside fearing eviction if the children are discovered. Others are living in overcrowded conditions.

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The LEGACY Act was inspired by the Academy Award® nominated documentary film, *LEGACY*, that follows an inner city Chicago family for five years as the family struggles to overcome the senseless loss of a young family member and leave the public housing projects. Because of a strong grandmother who helps raise several grandchildren and an anonymous gift for a down payment on a house, the family is eventually able to move into their own home and start promising new lives. The film has been used as an outreach tool to educate communities and families about issues affecting grandparents and other relatives and legislation like LEGACY that can assist these families.

The bill, **LEGACY -- Living Equitably: Grandparents Aiding Children and Youth** will assist grandfamilies by creating national demonstration projects within HUD's Section 202 and Section 8 programs to develop housing specifically for grandparents and other relatives raising children; provide access to fair housing funds for education and outreach efforts about the legal issue surrounding these families; provide specialized training to HUD personnel focused on grandparent- and other relative-headed families; and clarify that grandparents are eligible for family unification assistance.

“The LEGACY Act goes beyond the obvious benefits of having loving grandparents raise their grandchildren. The Act assists these grandfamilies by training HUD employees about this population's unique needs and providing flexible demonstration opportunities that can adapt to the unique needs of each community,” said Representative Morella.

For more information about the LEGACY bill or other issues related to grandparents or other relatives raising children, contact Generations United at 202-638-1263 or visit www.gu.org.

GENERATIONS UNITED (GU) is the only national membership organization focused solely on promoting intergenerational strategies, programs, and policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations and individuals representing more than 70 million Americans and is the only national organization advocating for the mutual well being of children, youth, and the elderly. Since 1986, Generations United has served as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU acts as a catalyst for stimulating collaboration between aging, children, and youth organizations providing a forum to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation.

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