



State Legislative Champions Bolster NACC's Counsel for Kids Campaign

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— REP. DAUGHERTY

Right now 14 states leave youth to navigate complex child welfare proceedings without legal assistance. In October 2021, NACC officially launched **Counsel for Kids**, a campaign dedicated to ensuring that children in foster care receive lawyers of their own.

During the 2021 and 2022 legislative sessions, state legislative champions emerged as leaders in the fight to achieve counsel for kids. They guided bills through the lawmaking process, educated peers, and built support among influential legislators and committees.



In **INDIANA**, Senator Jon Ford (R) filed Senate Bill 180 (2022), a proposal to appoint legal counsel for children in child protection proceedings. The bill stalled in the Appropriations committee after passing unanimously through the Family and Children Services committee. Ford then announced his plan to convene an independent study committee, to examine the issue of children's legal representation, made up of a diverse group of stakeholders including lived experience experts. Sen. Ford's actions lay the groundwork for eventual lasting change in Indiana.



In **COLORADO**, Representatives Lindsey Daugherty (D) and Tonya Van Beber (R) successfully led the charge to pass House Bill 22-1038 (2022), legislation that guarantees client-directed legal counsel for children age 12 and older in child protection court proceedings. The legislators prioritized centering young people in reform efforts. Hearing directly from young people about the need for an attorney to ascertain and advance "what they actually [want]" solidified legislative support. Rep. Daugherty said "Empowering our youth is essential for them to create a positive future. We need to ensure that our youth have the tools and resources necessary to make something of themselves, and that all starts with amplifying our children's voices so that they know they are actually heard."



In **ARIZONA**, Sen. Nancy Barto (R) sponsored Senate Bill 1391 (2021), signed into law in April 2021, which shifts the state's system from a best-interest to a client-directed model guaranteeing legal counsel to every child. Sen. Barto kept the bill on track and galvanized her peers. She said, "As some of the most vulnerable within our purview, the rights of dependent children should no longer be overlooked. They deserve to have their rights protected, especially within

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In **WASHINGTON** State, Rep. Noel Frame (D) championed House Bill 1219 (2021), signed into law in May 2021, which requires client-directed legal counsel for children age eight and older. Rep. Frame worked with lawmakers and coalitions of experts with lived experience, challenged problematic amendments, and developed extraordinary bipartisan support.



In **FLORIDA**, Sen. Lauren Book (D) sponsored Senate Bill 1920 (2021), requiring counsel for kids in licensed foster care. This proposal enjoyed unprecedented support before it reached Senate appropriations, where time ran out before a vote occurred. Sen. Book sponsored a similar bill in the 2022 session that sailed through the Children, Family and Elders Committee before stalling in the Appropriations subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice.