It was a long legislative session but here are a few positive accomplishments that kinship families can look forward to in the final outcome of 2020 budget:

$2.4 Million dollars were added to financially support kinship caregivers and eligibility changed for the “Kinship Stipend”. Now ALL unlicensed kinship families whose children are placed in care by DCS will receive the $75 kinship stipend, regardless of family income. In addition, DCS will now process these payments automatically along with the clothing and personal allowance, effectively removing any additional burdensome application steps for caregivers. Expect this change to begin July 1, 2019.

Arizona universities and community colleges are now required to provide a “tuition waiver scholarship” to children who were in foster care, or were adopted from foster care when they were at least 14 years old. This year’s change in law lowered the qualifying age from 16 years to 14 years, making MORE kids eligible for the financial assistance.

Legislators ensured that KidsCare, the popular low-cost health insurance program for Arizona children in low-income families, will continue on. Arizona law-makers had a hard deadline this year in which they needed to commit a share of state dollars to match the federal funding Arizona receives for this program. They did, and consequently over 35,000 kids will continue to have coverage and others who are eligible can continue to sign up.

Child care assistance finally passed the AZ legislature. After a year-long delay, AZ legislators finally allowed specifically designated federal funds to be used so that Arizona low income families can have greater access to childcare opportunities. These new funds will completely eliminate the waiting list for DES childcare subsidies (for the first time in over ten years) and lower out-of-pocket childcare costs for families struggling to make ends meet.