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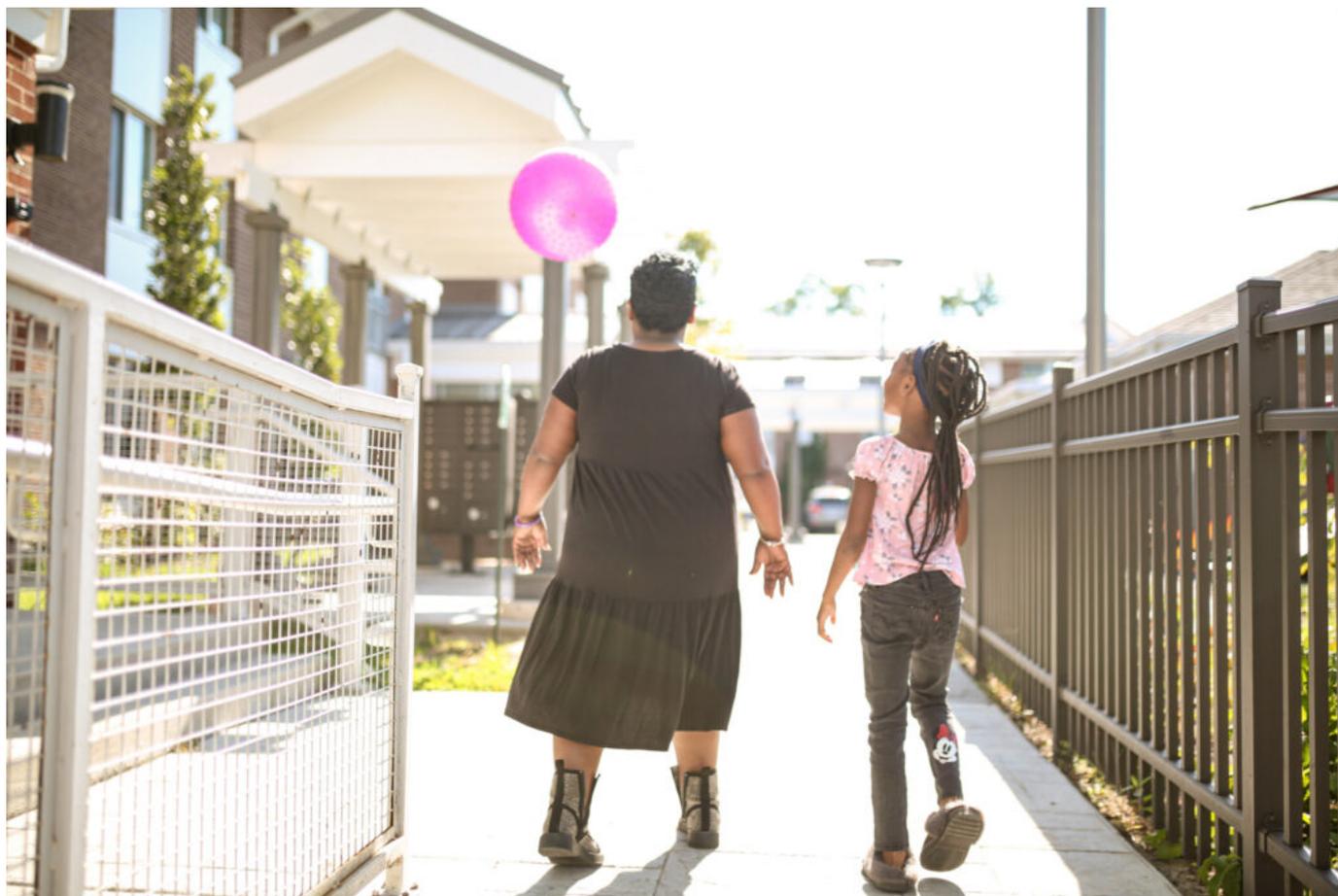
YOUTH & FAMILY NEWS

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Kinship Caregivers in D.C. Say Child Welfare Agency Owes Foster Payments

BY MORGAN BASKIN



K.H. took in her young niece three years ago to keep her out of the Washington, D.C., foster care system. In an ongoing lawsuit, she and other caregivers say they were denied the public support entitled to formal foster parents. Photo by Farrah Skeiky.

T

hree years ago, a Washington, D.C., woman received a distressed call with an urgent request: Her sister was being admitted to a psychiatric hospital and needed help caring for her then-5-year-old daughter. Could she take her in?

Facing financial insecurity herself, the woman — who asked to be identified by her initials due to the sensitive nature of her case — nevertheless wanted to help her sister. But K.H. was quickly overwhelmed by the challenges of a child with significant emotional needs who arrived from a struggling, unstable home.

“I had this child with no clothes, no anything,” she told The Imprint. “I was living paycheck to paycheck. I literally had to make a choice: my rent, or to take care of her.”

An ongoing lawsuit filed in 2019 on behalf of K.H. and several other local caregivers alleges although they rescued their relatives and protected them from entering foster care, they received none of the vital financial help they needed to care for the children.

K.H. repeatedly requested a foster parent license, and completed the necessary requirements. But each time, the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) refused, denying her financial assistance that would have amounted to \$1,140 a month or more than \$13,600 during the first year of caring for her niece.

The lawsuit alleges the child was placed “informally and illegally” in the care of her aunt. And because the agency did not recognize her formally as a caregiver, the agency did not help her obtain her niece’s birth certificate, medical records, immunization card or social security number, leaving her without access to welfare benefits or food stamps for an extended period.

To read the rest of this article, go to <https://imprintnews.org/top-stories/kinship-caregivers-in-d-c-say-child-welfare-agency-owes-foster-payments/59410>.