Good morning,

My name is Abby and I’m at senior at Norwalk High School. I’m here today to talk about guardianship and how it can be a permanent option for many youth. I entered into a guardianship type arrangement one year ago, when living with my family was no longer an option. Over the past year not only did I learn how to trust, how to love, and how to open my heart to those around me; I also learned how to budget, shop smart, and keep my room clean. Well, I’m still working on that last one! I was given clothing, food, shelter, and unconditional love.

While many people have the love to give, funding can be a huge barrier to agreeing to a guardian relationship. I would never want a youth to miss out on any of these wonderful things due to a lack of finances or subsidy.

The vast majority of families that become guardians for youth are grandparents on fixed incomes, family members who have other children of their own, or a person the youth chooses to be a parent, who maybe never considered having children. Raising a child in today’s world is expensive. Youth deserve a family, but we need to be compassionate and help families raise these children.

In 2014, legislators passed a law that allows the transfer of guardianship of a child if the person meets the definition of a custodian. Amp was thankful for that piece of legislation but it lacked funding for relatives and families stepping up to care for abandoned youth. This year, AMP requests that the state of Iowa access federal funding to implement the Guardian Assistance Program to provide legal guardians financial assistance for the care of their relative children/youth. Currently, 32 states offer the federal Guardianship Assistance Program but Iowa does not. A subsidized guardianship program allows caregivers to become legal guardians, replacing the state in that role and offers permanency when parental rights are not or will not be terminated.

Every child deserves a family and a chance at living a normal life. I know, that I would not be able to enjoy show choir, the school play, speech and short film studies in my senior year if I had not been taken in by my guardians. I hope my story has opened your eyes and hearts to this urgent situation.

Thank you for your time and attention.