



SENATOR DOSSETT INTERIM STUDY • 2026

Exploring Foster Parent *Reimbursement Rates*

The case for updating foster care reimbursement rates
for the first time since 2018

Laynie Gottsch

Foster Care & Adoptive Association of Oklahoma

WHO WE ARE

“To improve the lives of children by empowering foster and adoptive families through support, connection, and advocacy.”

FCAO MISSION STATEMENT

Laynie Gottsch

MBA · Nonprofit Leadership & Management

7+ years at Sarkeys Foundation

6+ years as a foster parent

4+ years as an FCAO foster parent mentor

BY THE NUMBERS

35+

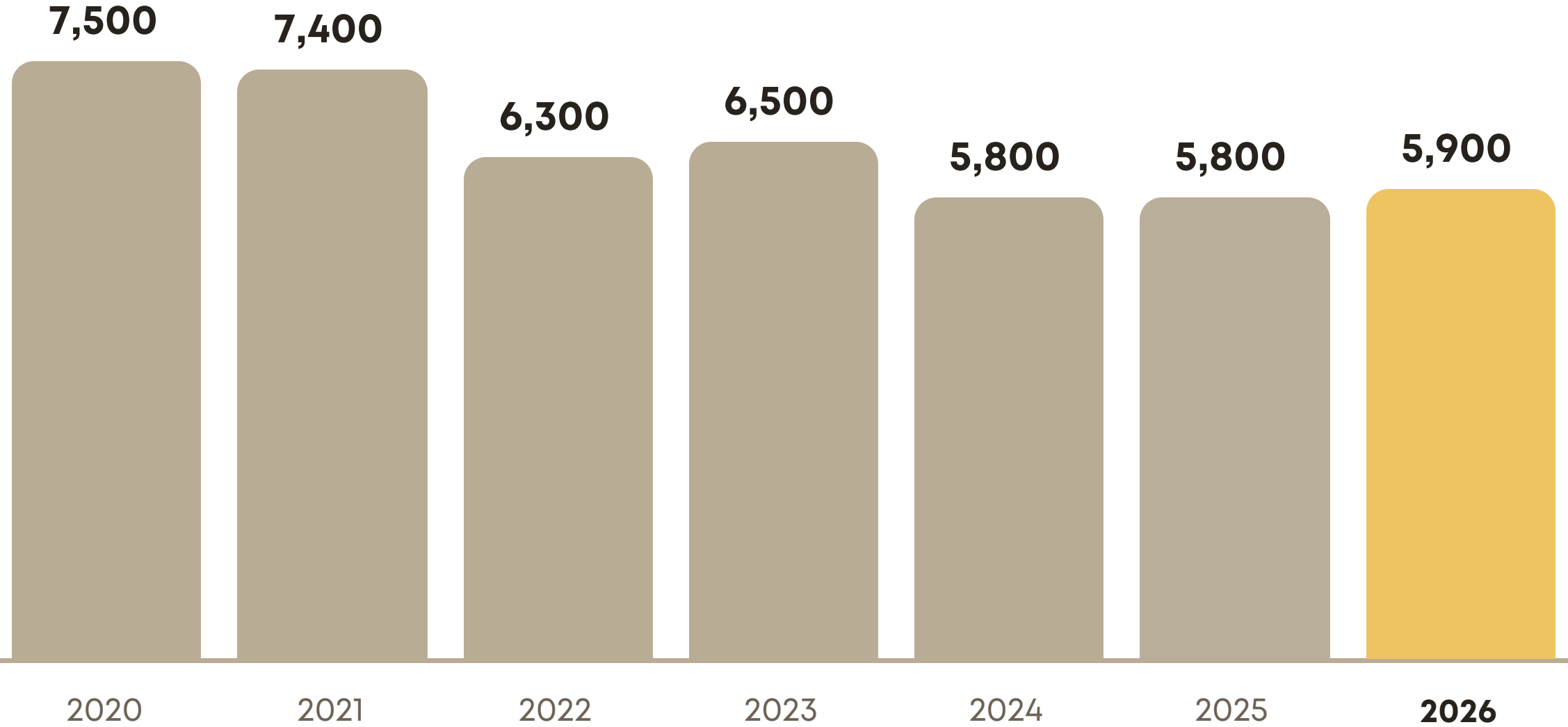
1

8



THE PROBLEM

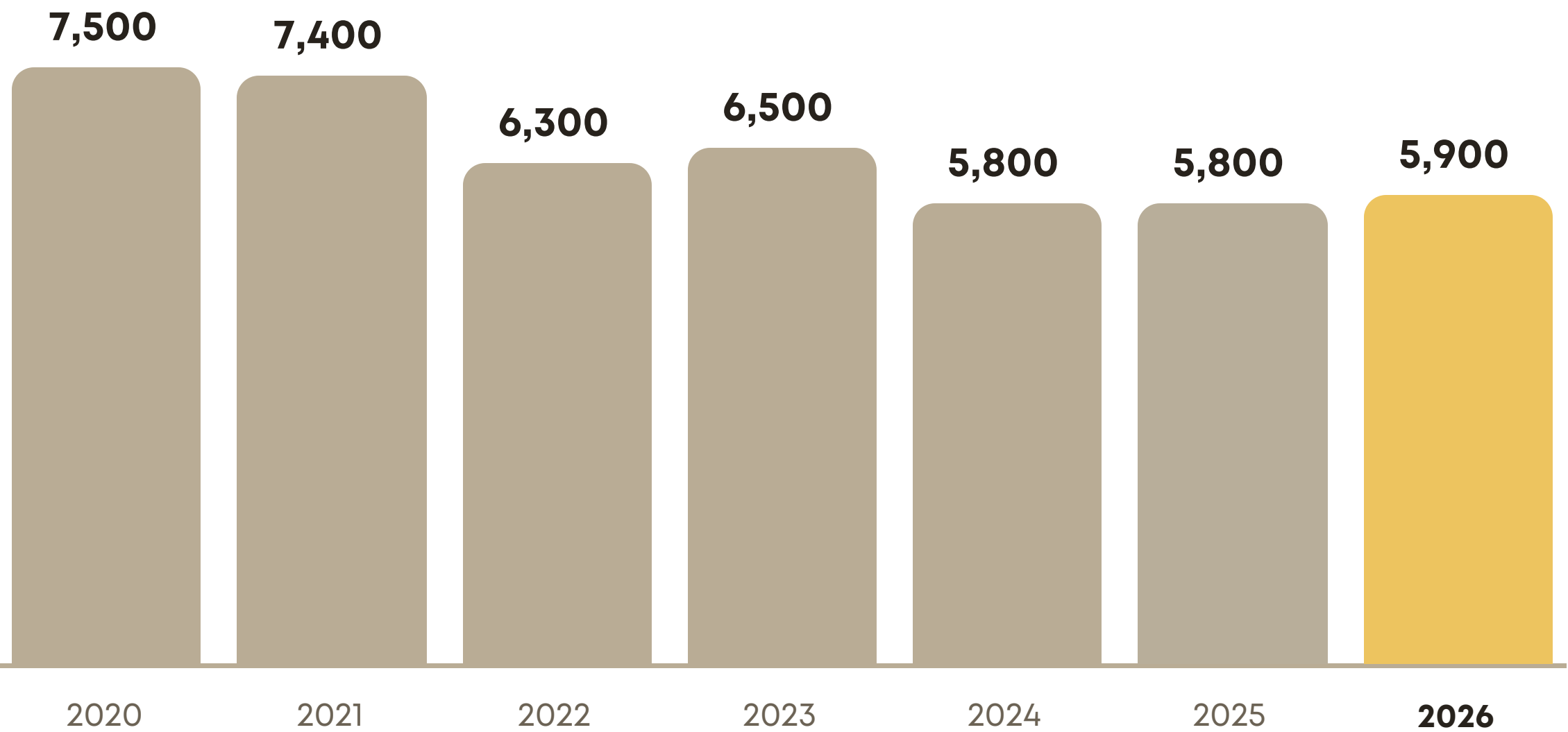
Fewer children in care, *too few homes*



400

THE PROBLEM

Fewer children in care, *too few homes*



400
more foster homes needed
As reported by OHS

THE PROBLEM

We not only have a recruitment problem but also a *retention* problem



Burnout, loss of a support network, and financial strain push families out. For every family that leaves, a new one must be **recruited, trained, and approved** all over again.

WHY IT MATTERS

Retention means *stability for the child*

Every experienced family that stays is a placement that doesn't have to move.

Healing & trust

Children recover when the adults around them stay consistent.

Healthy attachment

Consistent caregivers build the bonds kids carry for life.

Less added trauma

Each move is another loss for a child already in crisis.

School continuity

Fewer moves mean fewer school changes.

Placement options

More homes allow caseworkers to place children to the right family.

Cost savings

Keeping a family is cheaper than replacing one.

WHAT THE RATE IS FOR

The stipend is a *reimbursement*, not income

Oklahoma Human Services defines it as covering the child's basic costs:

Food

Clothing

Shelter

Personal incidentals

Reasonable travel

School supplies

When the rate falls short, the **family** covers the difference.

Oklahoma's current reimbursement rates

CHILD'S AGE	PER DAY	PER MONTH	PER YEAR
0–5	\$17.72	\$531	\$6,372
6–12	\$20.42	\$612	\$7,344
13+	\$22.62	\$678	\$8,143

2018

CURRENT RATES

Oklahoma's rates *haven't increased since 2018*

CHILD'S AGE	PER DAY	PER MONTH	PER YEAR
0–5	\$17.72	\$531	\$6,372
6–12	\$20.42	\$612	\$7,344
13+	\$22.62	\$678	\$8,143

2018

Oklahoma's last rate increase, eight years ago

SAME RATE, LESS VALUE

Frozen rates are *shrinking rates*

Consumer prices rose about 33% from 2018 to 2026. **The reimbursement didn't move.**

RATE NEEDED JUST TO KEEP 2018 VALUE

Ages 0–5	\$17.72	→	\$23.55
----------	---------	---	----------------

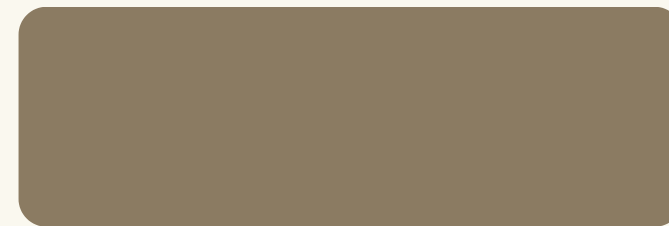
Ages 6–12	\$20.42	→	\$27.16
-----------	---------	---	----------------

Ages 13+	\$22.62	→	\$30.08
----------	---------	---	----------------

THE GAP

The rate covers about *one-third* of what it costs to raise a child

Annual Reimbursement
Ages 0–5



\$6,372

Annual cost to raise
a child in Oklahoma*



\$19,500

*Greater Oklahoma City Chamber

Who fills the gap today? **Churches · Nonprofits · Friends & family · Foster parents' own finances**

Basic needs — and a *normal childhood*

Needs

Recurring monthly and annual costs

- Food
- Clothing
- Transportation
- Hygiene products
- Medical care
- Housing
- Childcare
- School supplies
- Missed work
- Broken items

Normalcy

What helps a child feel like every other kid

- Skin & hair care
- Glasses/contacts
- Laptop
- Sports
- Social activities
- Cultural care
- Phone
- Driver's Ed
- Hobbies
- School photos
- Class tshirts

THE HIDDEN COST

The cost of inadequate foster capacity doesn't disappear. *It moves somewhere else.*

To the state

- OHS staff overtime
- Missing & lost belongings
- Strain on the whole system

To children

- Stress and instability
- Lost belongings
- Limited personal items
- Medication mismanagement

To foster families

- Financial and emotional stress
- Burnout
- Closing their homes

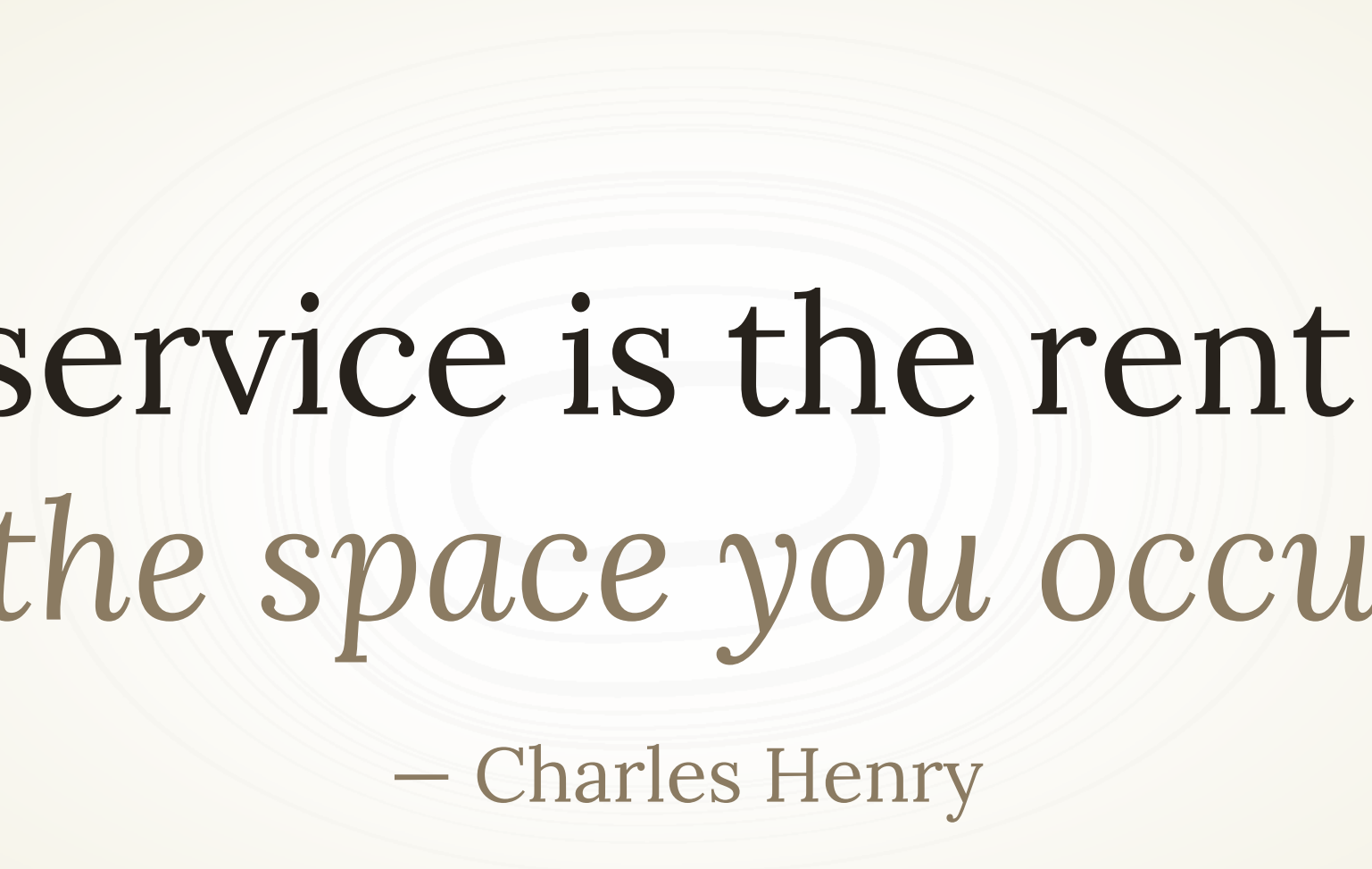
WHAT PREVENTS YOU FROM BEING ABLE TO SAY YES WHEN DHS CALLS?



All hygiene items. Girls on their cycle. Infants are the hardest because we have no idea what binky or bottle they are used to, so I have purchased many different ones. Diapers, wipes, formula because WIC hasn't started yet. Most teen boys want to shave and often ask for shaving items. Now it's football season and I said no to a teen boy last weekend because we have two games to attend and the daily amount doesn't even cover them getting into the game. Not to mention food for that day, unless I pack picnic style and we go to the car and eat, but that's embarrassing sometimes. They usually come with a bag of dirty laundry. I have to replace pillows and blankets sooo often.



— Oklahoma foster parent



“Public service is the rent you pay
for the space you occupy.”

— Charles Henry

~~“How much will it cost Oklahoma to increase foster care reimbursement rates?”~~

The better question:

What are the **human consequences** of not having enough stable foster homes?

OUR ASK

Invest in families *already saying yes*

1.

Restore the rate's value

Raise daily rates at least enough to recover the buying power lost since 2018, roughly 33%

2.

Keep it from eroding again

Tie future rates to an annual cost-of-living adjustment so families aren't left waiting another eight years.

3.

Measure against real costs

Review rates regularly against the actual cost of raising a child in Oklahoma.

Keeping a trained, approved family is the most cost-effective placement Oklahoma has.

Thank you. *Questions?*

Laynie.Gottsch@fcao.org

