

Remarks of State Senator Gale D. Candaras  
National Adoption Day  
November 16, 2007  
Hampden County Juvenile Court

Greetings and congratulations on behalf of the Great and General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts! I am honored and excited to be here with you this morning, and I am grateful for the opportunity to address this happy group.

In 1997, the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act was passed. This legislation brought about sweeping positive change in states across the nation, by eliminating many existing barriers to adoption. In a way, Massachusetts was ahead of the curve, having paved the way for these changes four years earlier in 1993, with legislation of our own. We are progressive on many issues in Massachusetts, and it is my hope that adoption will continue to rank high on that list.

I am told that this is one of the largest Adoption Day events in the Commonwealth, and I'm both impressed and inspired by your dedication. But you don't need me to tell you that your cause is an important one. The thirty-eight lives that will be changed today serve as a living testament to that fact.

Many of the children you will take home with you this afternoon have waited a long time for this day. At the end of the third quarter of 2007, forty-four percent of children in DSS custody with a goal of adoption had been in continuous placement by the Department for at least two years. In 1993, that number was seventy-six percent. Thanks to your efforts and those of your predecessors, children are being placed in permanent homes more quickly than in the past—but our work is not finished. We must do more to support our adoptive families.

The need for resources here in Hampden County is great. We are fortunate to have parents who are willing and able to open their doors to DSS-involved children, many of whom have suffered great hardships during their young lives. But the reality is that we need more people like you. And we need your help to bring into focus the issues that contribute to a child's involvement with DSS—poverty, education, mental health and addiction. In facilitating public awareness of these issues, eliminating stigmas associated with them, and advocating funding for related causes, we will together make tremendous strides toward reducing incidents of teen pregnancy, child abuse, crime, substance abuse and incarceration. While we want the number of children adopted from the Department of Social Services to increase each year, we would like to see the number of children placed in DSS custody decrease. Stand with us—those of us who advocate for children. Don't lose your voice—raise your voice with us.

We are sending an important message to our community today, and re-affirming the values that make Massachusetts, and Hampden County, a special place. Congratulations.