

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Danny Davis
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Ron Wyden
The U.S. Senate

The Honorable Jackie Walorski
U.S. House of Representatives

May 12, 2020

Dear Congress:

As national, state, and local organizations - along with young people with lived experience in the foster care system - dedicated to the well-being of young people in and from foster care, we write to urge Congress to act immediately to provide crucial supports to older youth facing the stress and disruptions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Approximately 18,000 youth exit foster care without a family each year, and, unfortunately, the outcomes for these young people are discouraging even in times of economic prosperity. Data indicate that on average, two in five foster youth who “age out” of care will experience episodes of homelessness and only 50 percent of youth will be employed at age 24. The COVID-19 crisis will only exacerbate these dire outcomes.

FosterClub, a national network for young people from foster care, conducted an online poll of 172 transition-age youth from March 21 through March 24. The results are very troubling:

- 28% of respondents described their home as having a food crisis or being very low on food
- 40% indicated that they had been forced to move or feared being forced to move
- 27% of respondents had been laid off and another 40% have had their hours severely cut
- 18% indicated they are in a money crisis and 33% stated they had less than a week’s worth of cash on hand
- 23% said they wished they had more people to help them through the crisis, and
- 14% of respondents indicated that they are on their own, or almost entirely on their own

State and local leaders across the country are working hard to continue vital services and resources to older youth during these extraordinary times, but they face major challenges, so Congress must act now to address these needs. We urge Congress to consider the series of legislative recommendations provided below for inclusion in the next COVID-19 relief bill.

Proposed Actions for Federal Legislation

1. Increase Chafee Funding by 500 Million.

Funds from the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood can pay for the vital resources and services that young people need immediately and urgently, but have remained at \$140 million since its enactment in 1999 and only increased to \$143 million this year. Providing a well overdue increase in funding for Chafee will allow states to meaningfully meet the immediate needs of youth and young adults during this crisis and help support them as they plan for their future past the COVID-19 crisis.

2. Extend the Age of Eligibility for Chafee Aftercare Services to Age 23 for All Youth.

Flexible Chafee funds can be used to meet many of the immediate needs of young people who are still making the transition to adulthood. These funds can help with immediate needs for housing,

food, and other service supports that are so vital at this time. Congress has acknowledged the wisdom of providing these services to youth until age 23. Youth in all states should have the benefit of this opportunity for support.

3. Suspend Participation Requirements for Young People in Extended Foster Care.

Suspending the work, school, and program participation requirements for youth in extended foster care will allow youth to remain safe, healthy, and housed. This action will allow them to continue to receive placement and support services through the COVID-19 crisis so they can stay on track to meet their goals. Without this action, many youth may be pushed out of the system to homelessness and unsafe situations where their health will be at great risk.

4. Place a Moratorium on Discharges from the Foster Care System for Youth Ages 18-21.

By providing young people the safety and security of maintaining their current living arrangements and services, they will be in the best position to stay healthy and continue working towards their goals for their future. This additional time and support will help young people and child welfare agencies be able to appropriately plan for a successful transition out of care and into adulthood.

5. Allow States to Draw Down Title IV-E funds until a Young Person Reaches Age 22.

By allowing states to draw down Title IV-E funds after a young person reaches age 21, states will be encouraged to provide continued services for youth in this time of great need. This will help ensure that young people are not cut off from housing and services when they need it the most. It will also ensure that states have the capacity and funds to meet their needs.

We are aware that many young people are suffering from financial hardship at this time. However, unlike their peers, many foster youth have no family or support network to turn to for help navigating these challenges. We ask that you not forget them as you move forward in supporting our nation's recovery from COVID.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sponsoring Organizations





Sign-on by:

522 young people and advocates representing 47 states
129 foster parents/kinship caregivers representing 28 states

National organizations

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
American Psychological Association
Association of Children's Residential Centers (ACRC)
Bethany Christian Services
Child Welfare League of America
Christina Meredith Foundation
City Of Excellence Worship Centre
Family Centered Treatment Foundation
Family Focused Treatment Association
First Star, Inc.
The Forum for Youth Investment
Foster America
Gay Parent Magazine
Lutheran Services in America
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA)
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Crittenton

National Equality Action Team
National Youth Employment Coalition
Parents as Teachers National Center
Partnership for America's Children
RESULTS
Silver Lining Mentoring
Sisters of Charity Federation
Think of Us
Together We Rise
True Colors United
Voice for Adoption

State and local organizations by state

Alaska

Facing Foster Care in Alaska

Arizona

Arizona Council of Human Service Providers
Child and Family Resources, Inc.
Children's Action Alliance
Onward Hope, Inc.
Opportunities for Youth

Arkansas

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

California

Advokids
Alliance for Children's Rights
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Youth Connection
Children's Law Center of California
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Doing Good Works
Foster Care Counts
Hillsides
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Krista Foster Homes
Legal Services for Children
Phenomenal Families
Mustardseed Rach
Tulare County Office of Education - Foster Youth Services
VOICES

Colorado

Kippi Clausen
Rocky Mountain Children's Law Center

Connecticut

CAFAF
Children in Placement - Connecticut, Inc.
Community Health Resources
Connecticut Alliance of Foster and Adoptive Families

Delaware

KIDS COUNT in Delaware

District of Columbia

Association of Children's Residential Centers (ACRC)
BEST Kids, Inc.
Children's Law Center
DC Alliance of Youth Advocates
Lutheran Services in America
National Youth Employment Coalition
Partnership for America's Children
Sasha Bruce Youthwork
True Colors United

Florida

Florida's Children First

Georgia

Crusade to Nurture Children's Success

Illinois

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions
Hoyleton Youth and Family Services
Lawrence Hall
TasselTurn

Indiana

Children's Bureau Inc
Family Ark, Inc.
Interact Family Services, Inc.
Marion County Commission on Youth, Inc. (MCCOY)
PSI Services of Indiana Inc.
The Villages of Indiana, Inc.
Yes Home

Iowa

Child and Family Policy Center
Lutheran Services in Iowa
YSS, Youth, Teen & Family Mental & Behavioral Health Services

Kentucky

Home of the Innocents
Kentucky Youth Advocates
Murray State Voices Of The Commonwealth Chairman

Louisiana

CASA New Orleans
CASA of Lafourche
CASA of St. Landry-Evangeline, Inc.
Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families

Maine

Volunteers of America Northern New England
Maine Children's Alliance

Maryland

SPADE
The Nolita Project, Inc

Massachusetts

Silver Lining Mentoring

Michigan

Bethany Christian Services
Fostering Success Michigan
Samaritas
StarrVista, Inc.
The Student Advocacy Center of Michigan

Minnesota

Family Alternatives
Foster Advocates

Montana

Partnership for Children

Nebraska

Nebraska Appleseed
Voices for Children in Nebraska

Nevada

Children's Advocacy Alliance

New Jersey

Embracing & Empowering Families
New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.
New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council

New Mexico

Childhaven, Inc.
NMCAN

New York

Abbott House
Children's Aid
Court Appointed Special Advocates of NYC (CASA-NYC)

Girl Vow
LaSalle School
Lawyers For Children
National Equality Action Team
The New York Foundling
New Directions Youth and Family Services, Inc.
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
We All Rise

North Carolina

NC Child
Equality North Carolina

Ohio

Action Ohio

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy
Peppers Ranch Foster Care Community

Oregon

Aimee Levens Consulting
FosterClub
National Crittenton
Oregon Child Abuse Solutions
Our Children Oregon
Oregon Foster Youth Connection

Pennsylvania

C. B. Community Schools
CONCERN
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
Turning Points for Children
University of Pittsburgh Child Welfare Education and Research Programs
Wesley Family Services of Western PA

Rhode Island

Adoption Rhode Island
Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

South Carolina

Berkeley County Foster Parent Association
Fostering Great Ideas
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center

Tennessee

Monroe Harding, Inc.
Youth Villages

Texas

Amarillo Children's Home
Christina Meredith Foundation
Foster Care Alumni of America, Tx Chapter
Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services
The SAFE Alliance

Utah

Division of Child and Family Services

Vermont

Voices for Vermont's Children
Washington County Youth Service Bureau/ Youth Development Program

Virginia

Blue Ridge CASA for Children
Lutheran Family Services of Virginia
Voices for Virginia's Children

Washington

A Way Home Washington
Center for Children & Youth Justice
Foster Parent Allies of Washington State
Legal Counsel for Youth and Children
The Mockingbird Society
Partners for Our Children
Skookum Kids
Treehouse
Washington Association for Children and Families
Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid
YMCA of Greater Seattle