

9/8/2020

Dear First Lady Melania Trump,

Thank you for your interest in and commitment to current and former foster youth across the country. We are grateful for your time in meeting with the 2020 class of Foster Youth Interns from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute last month, which comes at a critical time. Since the internship program began, it has sought to elevate the voices of those with lived experience in the child welfare system to people who are in a position to make a difference. Your interest in issues facing youth experiencing foster care is greatly appreciated.

As a group of care experienced individuals, we commend you for your support of the *Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act* introduced by Representatives Danny Davis and Jackie Walorski. The provisions of this legislation would make a significant difference for older foster youth facing unprecedented stress amid the COVID-19 pandemic. However, to make this a reality and deliver the necessary relief, we now need Congress to come together and act and pass this legislation.

Since the public health emergency began in March, many older youth in or transitioning out of foster care have struggled with school closures, job losses, and housing displacement. Many of these individuals may have aged out of the foster care system with no permanent family support adding another layer of stress and uncertainty during this time. FosterClub, a national nonprofit that seeks to engage with youth across the country conducted a [survey](#) which revealed just how difficult navigating this pandemic has been for older youth. 51% of youth reported being low on food or having run out, 65% lost their jobs or saw their hours reduced, 23% were facing housing insecurity, and almost 20% had no connections to adults that could help. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have weighed heavily on our country, but older youth experiencing foster care are disproportionately impacted. To date, no targeted relief for older youth in, or who have recently exited foster care, has been included in the COVID-19 relief packages that have become law.

The bipartisan, *Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act*, would help to alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for older youth immediately. While the House of Representatives has introduced the legislation, it is critical the Senate take action. **As the First Lady of the United States, we urge you to continue using your voice to advocate for the *Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act* among members of the House and Senate and that the bill or its provisions be enacted as soon as possible.** This would add a significant contribution to the advocacy efforts being undertaken by many organizations, individuals, and current and former youth in foster care to ensure long-overdue aid for older youth as this global health crisis stretches on.

Thank you for your ongoing support of individuals, like us, who have experienced foster care. Together, we can strengthen the child welfare system and ensure youth and families do not fall through the cracks.

Sincerely,

Alan Abutin-Class of 2020

Hailey D'Elia-Class of 2020

Isabelle Goodrich-Class of 2020

Laila-Rose Hudson-Class of 2020

Makayla James-Class of 2020

Melvin Roy-Class of 2020

Liliana Cory-Class of 2019

Ria Esteves-Class of 2019

Mackenzie McGeehan-Class of 2019

Lino Pena-Martinez-Class of 2019  
Calli Cook-Class of 2018  
Eden Harris-Class of 2017  
Michael Teresa Mellifera-Class of 2017  
Keola Pagud-Class of 2017  
Htet Htet Rodgers-Class of 2017  
Alexandria Ware-Class of 2017  
Vaneshia Reed-Class of 2016  
Jennifer Rhodes-Class of 2016  
Keri Richmond-Class of 2015  
Kellie Becker-Class of 2014  
Jane Krienke-Class of 2014  
Robert Parsons-Class of 2014  
Ashleigh Beck-Class of 2013  
Alain Datcher-Class of 2013  
Melanie Roberts-Class of 2011  
Sara Cosenza-Class of 2004  
Jeremey Harvey-Class of 2004  
Cherish Allen (nèe Johnson)-Class of 2002