

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

March 18, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

As co-chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth, we urge you to consider the needs of the nation's current and former foster youth as you continue to work to address the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Foster youth may be particularly vulnerable to financial hardship and food and housing insecurity during this time. To address these unique challenges, we respectfully request that you include provisions in the next legislative package addressing COVID-19 to provide temporary assistance for this population, including support for housing, healthcare, nutrition, and other basic needs.

On any given day, there are approximately 437,000 youth in foster care across the country, and nearly 18,000 youth exit foster care without a family each year. Unfortunately, the outcomes of youth who "age out" of care on their own are extremely discouraging. Data indicate that two in five youth will experience episodes of homelessness and only half of youth who "age out" of care will be employed at age 24. These youth are at extraordinary risk of suffering the harshest of the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 response. Furthermore, of those who are still in care, nearly one third are living with relatives, many of whom are grandparents in the high-risk category for COVID-19. Others reside in congregate care, where space, medical supply shortages, and staffing issues pose additional health challenges.

Given the unique difficulties faced by this population, we urge you to include provisions in the next legislative package to temporarily increase supports for these youth and their caregivers. We are pleased that the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* included a temporary increase in the federal medical assistance percentage, which will provide additional funding for state and tribal child welfare agencies, including for foster youth through Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. However, we are concerned that during this time of economic and social uncertainty, there may be an increased number of disrupted adoptions and children placed in the foster care system. We therefore ask that you also increase funds for Title IV-B programs, which will provide enhanced supports for Tribes, foster parents, kinship caregivers, and residential providers.

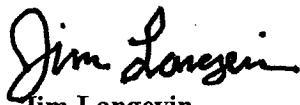
Additionally, to address the unique challenges facing transition-age youth, we ask that you consider supplemental funding for the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee), which supports foster youth ages 14 to 21, and up to age 23 in states that have extended care. These services, which include educational assistance and room and board, are crucial for youth transitioning into adulthood. Any additional funds appropriated for Chafee must have maximum flexibility for states to ensure they can use them immediately to help ease the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on these youth.

Furthermore, we request that you consider temporarily increasing funding and flexibility for the Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program to assist current and former foster youth in college who may have nowhere to go as their dorms and dining halls close. Many colleges and universities have closed their dorms as a necessary public health measure, and we are concerned for the approximately 10,000

current and former foster youth who rely on this housing. We are heartened to learn that many schools in our Congressional districts have kept their dorms open to housing-insecure students, but additional ETV funds and flexibility would assist those who are still in need. In addition to increasing funding, we ask that you provide the Departments of Health and Human Services; Housing and Urban Development; and Agriculture with the funds and authority to temporarily waive program restrictions that could result in homelessness, food insecurity, or inadequate healthcare for current and former foster youth.

During this difficult time for the American people, it is crucial that we not forget our most vulnerable youth. Current and former foster youth deserve the same care and concern offered to their non-foster peers. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with you to ensure the COVID-19 legislative response includes support for current and former foster youth and their caregivers.

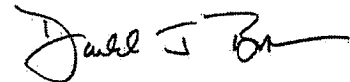
Sincerely,



Jim Langevin
Member of Congress



Karen Bass
Member of Congress



Don Bacon
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Nita M. Lowey, Chairwoman, Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Richard E. Neal, Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor
The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Kevin Brady, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Ranking Member, Committee on Education and Labor