

February 21, 2024

Representative Judy Chu
United States House of Representatives
2423 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Erin Houchin
United States House of Representatives
1632 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Chu and Houchin,

As national, state, and local organizations invested in the success and well-being of transition aged youth, we are writing to express our support for H.R. 7010, the *Increasing Access to Foster Care through 21 Act*. This legislation builds on the advances in supports and service provision made by states that currently extend foster care beyond age 18 and will take significant steps toward ensuring that **all young people in foster care have the option to remain in care until age 21**, regardless of where they live.

Our society has changed since Congress first directed federal foster care to end at age 18 in 1980 – traditional paths to adulthood no longer include finding a full-time job shortly after high school and retaining that job for years, building stability and security. Immediate marriage, enrollment, or being drafted into the military have changed as well, happening less commonly than in the past. Even education has changed, with fewer students completing two- and four-year degrees on time. With rising costs of living and fewer opportunities available, many young adults choose to live at home and rely on the support of their families well past high school as they seek education, employment, and stable housing; why do we expect their peers in foster care to become fully independent on their eighteenth birthday? We must ensure that young people in foster care have access to similar supports as they transition to adulthood and independence.

Federal data tells us that compared to youth that exit foster care at age 18, youth who remain in care have better outcomes across multiple measures. According to the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) report to Congress in February 2020, youth who remain in care past age 18 have higher rates of employment, housing, school attendance and graduation, and health coverage compared to those who exit at age 18. They also have lower rates of incarceration, drug treatment referrals, and giving birth or fathering a child.¹ This important legislation would give all young people the option to remain in care, allowing them the opportunity to achieve such improved outcomes.

The *Increasing Access to Foster Care through 21 Act* allows states the flexibility to design tailored programs to meet the needs of the young people they serve. States that currently extend care do so in a variety of ways, including family foster care providers, independent living arrangements, institutional settings including college dorms, group homes, maternity homes, Job Corps and other employment training settings, and voluntary substance abuse treatment facilities. States will continue to have the freedom to decide how best to meet the needs of this population

¹¹ NYTD Report to Congress. Administration on Children and Families. Children's Bureau. February 18, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/report/nytd-report-congress>

and will benefit from the financial incentive provided by delinking this population from the AFDC eligibility requirements. Young people across the nation will benefit from the removal of participation requirements and the increased access to the services and stability provided through extended care.

Thank you for your continued commitment to children and youth in foster care. We applaud you for addressing this gap and taking this important step toward ensuring that all young people have access to the support they need to successfully gain independence.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Association of Children's Residential & Community services (ACRC)

Board of Child Care

Boys Town

Center for the Study of Social Policy

Child Welfare League of America

Children's Advocacy Institute

Children's Defense Fund

Church World Service

Civitas ChildLaw Center

Coalition on Human Needs

Congressional Research Institute on Social Work Policy

Creating Actionable and Real Solutions (CARES), A Youth-Led Initiative of the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP)

CSH

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

EElias and Company

Family Centered Treatment Foundation

Family Focused Treatment Association

First Focus Campaign for Children

Foster Care Alumni of America

Foster Care to Success

Generations United

Healthy Teen Network

Journey to Success

Justice and Joy National Collaborative (formerly National Crittenton)

Mental Health America

National Association of Counsel for Children

National Association of Counties

National Association of County Human Services Administrators

National Center for Housing & Child Welfare

National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR)

National Center on Adoption and Permanency
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Employment Law Project
National Federation of Families
National Foster Parent Assoc.
National Head Start Association
National Network for Youth, Inc.
National Youth Advocate Program, Inc.
Plan P
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Residential Child Care Project
Rights4Girls
SchoolHouse Connection
Selfless Love Foundation
Strategies for Youth
The Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research at the University of Pennsylvania
Voice for Adoption
Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.
Youth Law Center
Youth Villages

Arizona

Children's Action Alliance

California

All Saints Church Foster Care Project
Children's Law Center of California
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Extraordinary Families
FosterHope Sacramento
Hillsides
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Justice Management Services
San Jose State University
Stanford Sierra Youth & Families

Colorado

Tennyson Center for Children

Connecticut

Connecticut Alliance of Foster and Adoptive Families

Delaware

CASA

Children & Families First

District of Columbia

DC Child & Family Services Agency

Florida

Citrus FCN Youth Advisory Council

Florida Foster Care Review

Friends of Foster Children

Youth and Family Alternatives

Georgia

Brightside - Savannah Chatham CASA

Illinois

Illinois Collaboration on Youth

Indiana

Foster Success

Kentucky

Children's Alliance

MSU Training Resource Center

Louisiana

Clover, Inc.

Maryland

JUST alittle LOVE LLC

Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSSNCA)

The National Center for Children and Families

Massachusetts

18 Degrees

Children's League of Massachusetts

COMPASS

FCSN

Hopewell

Roxbury Youth Works, Inc.

Michigan

MCHS Family of Services

Office of the Child Advocate

Spaulding for Children

Missouri

FosterAdopt Connect

Montana

Montana CASA/GAL Association

Nebraska

Nebraska Appleseed

Nevada

Shining Star Community Services

New Hampshire

The Home For Little Wanderers

New Jersey

Rutgers University

Multicultural Community Services, Inc.

New York

Children's Aid

Fostering Youth Success Alliance

Laura Rice Stein Consulting, LLC

St. Catherine's Center for Children

North Carolina

Benchmarks

Children's Home Society of North Carolina

Mecklenburg County Youth and Family Services

Second Family Foundation

Ohio

Institute for Human Services

Cadence Care Network

Oregon

Options Counseling and Family Services

CTUIR

Pennsylvania

Turning Points for Children

Rhode Island

Adoption Rhode Island

South Carolina

HALOS

Texas

Texas Alliance of Child & Family Services

Utah

4 The Youth Inc.

Virginia

Intercept Behavioral Health

UMFS

Washington

Partners for Our Children

Wisconsin

Anu Family Services