

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.<sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>11</sup> 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

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