EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: OHIO HOUSE BILL 50
Legislation will Extend Services to Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

Info Columbus, OH | June 2015

Summary Ohio House Bill 50 creates a new program to serve youth who age out of foster care, and those adopted after age 16, through their 21st birthdays. The bill is sponsored by Reps. Dorothy Pelanda (R-Marysville) and Cheryl Grossman (R-Grove City).

- House Bill 50 will allow supports and services to be extended to foster alumni ages 18-21 to help these young people prepare for college or a career, as well as a wide array of transitional housing programs for the young adults, including apartment programs, campus housing, and foster and host homes.
- House Bill 50 was introduced on Feb. 10, 2015.
- The bill recently cleared two committees in the House of Representatives with bipartisan and near unanimous support.
- The recommended program is fully compatible with Gov. John Kasich’s new approach for local social services, as outlined in the operating budget.

Details

Sobering Statistics
Each year, more than 1,000 Ohio youth "age out" of foster care at age 18. Research indicates that these young people are at high risk of homelessness, unemployment, insufficient education, dependence on public assistance, human trafficking and other obstacles to success.

- 14 percent had a child
- 16 percent received financial assistance
- 24 percent worked part time; 12 percent worked full time
- 26 percent experienced homelessness within the last two years
- 36 percent were incarcerated
- 53 percent had not completed high school or received a GED

(Source: National Youth in Transition Database, 2013 Ohio Data)

View sobering statistics infographic.
View benefits of doing it right infographic.

Cost Benefits
It is estimated that for State Fiscal Year 2017, 1,500 Ohio foster youth ages 18-21 will participate in the program at a projected state share of $9.7 million per year. This investment will ultimately save taxpayer dollars.

A study issued in May 2013 by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative shows that, on average, for every young person who ages out of foster care, taxpayers and communities pay $300,000 in social costs like public assistance, incarceration, and lost wages to a community over that person’s lifetime.
National Precedent
This initiative is more than six years in the making and utilizes a proven approach.

- On Oct. 7, 2008, the *Fostering Connection to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act* (H.R. 6893/P.L. 110-351) was signed into law. The law provides federal Title IV-E funds (federal money allotted to match state child welfare services) to states to support foster youth through age 21. Prior to enactment of this law, virtually all states cut off foster care services at age 18.
- Since 2008, 26 states and the District of Columbia have, or are in the process of, extending supports to foster youth through age 21.

Support
Thousands of Ohioans, businesses, community leaders, and statewide groups have expressed strong support for House Bill 50. Sixteen individuals testified to the Ohio General Assembly in support of the bill this spring. In addition, Ohio Fostering Connections held a Statehouse Advocacy Day on March 26 in which more than 300 supporters gathered together to express support and share their stories with legislators. Advocates include former foster youth, child caring professionals, social organizations and public officials. Excerpts from some of the bill testimony include:

"At the age of 18, I wasn't ready to become fully independent, honestly, I don't think anyone is, but I didn't get that choice. Had I been given the choice, not to be in foster care, but to have the continued support of the foster care system such as a mentor... I would have said yes. And I am 100% sure that I would have been successful and able to finish school, keep my own place, and I would be a social worker right now. Foster youth, current and future, need these supports and we can put that into action.”

*Nicole Chinn, former foster youth*

"In the last five years, the Junior League of Cleveland has been working with older youth in foster care with the goal of improving outcomes for youth aging out of foster care. Through our volunteer efforts, we have worked with youth at the precipice of independence. Often these young people lack the adequate skills for life on their own—whether financial, awareness of community resources, or basic homemaking skills. HB 50 will enable the PCSAs to provide that much needed additional support through quality services and programs specifically designed to meet the needs of the emerging adult.”

*Annemarie M. Grassi, Ph.D., president, Junior League of Cleveland*

"I have been an advocate for youth in our foster care system for many years and applaud the provisions in this legislation to extend benefits to age 21. Foster youth who lack a reliable support system are thrust into a harsh reality when they ‘age out’ of the child welfare system and this is a step in the right direction to give them more time to make the transition to adulthood while still having a formal support system.”

*Mike DeWine, Ohio Attorney General*

Ohio Fostering Connections is funded by the Cleveland Foundation, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, George Gund Foundation, Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Lighthouse Youth Services, and Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies. More than 30 agencies endorse the initiative, as well.

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