

Representatives Danny K. Davis (D-IL) & Darin LaHood (R-IL)

H.R. 7529, Fresh Starts for Foster Youth Act

Foster youth face numerous challenges as they transition to adulthood. Leading advocacy organizations have highlighted that foster youth can experience legal needs that often are acute and time-sensitive, threatening a young person's housing, educational goals, income, and family stability at a time when they have the least support. For example, in 2020, the National Foster Care Youth & Alumni Policy Council listed quality legal representation as one of its four [Youth & Alumni Priorities](#) to help older foster youth. Similarly, since launching its Virtual Support Services program in 2021, Think of Us reports that 18% of all requests from transition-age youth relate to legal services. A few of the most common categories of legal need include: housing stability and eviction defense; guardianship and custody, especially for youth informally caring for relatives; access to vital records; needs of expectant and parenting youth; navigating public benefits; reentry into extended care; legal issues; education and disability advocacy; protection orders or safety-related civil remedies; employment rights; and credit repair when fraud or inaccurate debt appear.

The *Fresh Starts for Foster Youth Act* would improve access to legal representation and counseling to help foster youth transition to adulthood by resolving legal issues affecting housing, education, employment entry, and family conditions. Specifically, the bill would amend the John H. Chafee Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee) program to require States to consider legal issues affecting youth as part of case planning and to provide States with the option to use funds to support access to legal representation and counseling. The Chafee program provides \$143 million a year in flexible funding to states, territories, and Indian tribal entities to support foster youth as they transition to adulthood. The broad-range of supports and services – such as education, career, housing, and preventive health – assist young people who experienced foster care at age 14 or older.

The *Fresh Starts for Foster Youth Act* would make two changes to the Chafee Program:

- Add supporting access to legal services and counseling to the list of purposes for which States may use federal Chafee funds.
- Require states to certify that the case planning process considers efforts that may be needed to resolve legal issues affecting, housing, education, employment entry, and family conditions.

The bill is supported by over 140 foster youth, child welfare, child and family, and legal advocates, including: American Academy of Pediatrics; Brightpoint; Child Welfare League of America; Children's Advocacy Institute; Foster Care Alumni of America; FosterClub; Juvenile Law Center; National Foster Youth Institute; Think of Us; Youth Law Center; and Youth Villages. To cosponsor, please contact Jill.Hunter-Williams@mail.house.gov (Davis) or Ben.Monticello@mail.house.gov (LaHood).

140+ Organizations Endorse – H.R. 7529, Fresh Starts for Foster Youth Act

1999 Collective (Utah)	Foster Success	San Bernardino County Children and Family Services
Advo Kids	FosterAdopt Connect	San Diego Center for Children
Alaska Chapter of FFTA	FosterClub	San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency
Allies for Every Child	Fostering Academic Achievement Nationwide (FAAN)	SchoolHouse Connection
Alumni Coming Together to Improve Outcomes Now of Ohio (ACTION Ohio)	Fostering Youth Success Alliance (New York)	Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (New York)
American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)	Freedom From Foster Care A Nonprofit Organization	SCO Family of Services
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (Arkansas)	FRIENDS National Center for Families & Communities Rising	St. Augustine Youth Services (Florida)
Association of Children's Residential and Community Services (ACRC)	Friends of Children, Inc. (Massachusetts)	St. Judes Ranch for Children
Boys Town	HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana (Hawai'i)	Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (North Carolina)
Brightpoint	Hillsides (California)Public Counsel (California)	Table Sense
CarePortal	Hope Village for Children, Inc. (Mississippi)	Texans Care for Children (California)
CARES Initiative, Center for the Study of Social Policy	iFoster	Texas Alliance For Youth Success
Center for the Study of Social Policy	Impact Living Services	The Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research at the University of Pennsylvania
Child Abuse Prevention Council of San Joaquin County (CAPC)	IMPOWER (Florida)	The Home for Little Wanderers
Child Advocacy Center of McHenry County	Journey to Success	The Mockingbird Society (Washington)
Child and Family Services of Saginaw County	Justice + Joy National Collaborative	The Omni Family of Services
Child Welfare League of America	Juvenile Law Center	Think of Us
Children Now (California)	Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice (Kansas)	Together Georgia
Children's Advocacy Institute	Kentucky Youth Advocates (Kentucky)	Treehouse (Washington)
Children's Home Society of Virginia (Virginia)	Kinship Care Resource Center, Clayton County	Upbring
Children's League of Massachusetts (Massachusetts)	Koinonia Family Services	Voices for Children
Children's Aid	KVC Missouri	Voices for Children Coalition (Pennsylvania)
Children's Home Society of NC (North Carolina)	LA Department of Children and Family Services	Voices for Georgia's Children (Georgia)
Children's Law Center (California)	Lake County Public Children Services Agency (PCSA)	Voices for Virginia's Children (Virginia)
Children's Law Center (DC)	Lorain County Children Services	Wake County Children and Family Services
Citizens for Juvenile Justice (Massachusetts)	Maine Children's Alliance (Maine)	Walden Family Services
Clermont County Children's Protective Services	Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (Massachusetts)	Wellpoint Children's Wisconsin
CocoKids	MCHS Family of Services (Michigan)	Wellspring Lutheran Services
Colorado Office of the Child Representative (Colorado)	MDDTSpeaks Holdings, Inc.	West Michigan Partnership for Children
Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth	Missouri Coalition for Children	Winston Rhea Scholars (Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina)
Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI)	National Association of Counsel for Children	Wisconsin Association of Family & Children's Agencies
Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of:	National Association of Counties (NACo)	Youth Law Center
• Baltimore County	National Association of County Human Services Administrators	Youth Villages
• California	National Association of County Human Services Administrators	YSS – AMP (Iowa)
• Las Vegas	National Center for Housing and Child Welfare (NCHCW)	
• Los Angeles	National Center on Adoption and Permanency	
• McHenry County	National Foster Parent Association	
• Monterey County	National Foster Youth Institute (NFYI)	
• Nevada	Nebraska Appleseed (Nebraska)	
• North Carolina	New Morning Youth & Family Services	
• Sacramento	NMCAN (New Mexico)	
• San Bernardino County	North American Family Institute	
Crittenton Services for Children and Families	Nuevo Amanecer Latino Children Services	
Crossnore Communities for Children	Office of the Child Advocate (Delaware)	
Daniels Kids	Orange County Social Services Agency	
Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption	Our Children Oregon (Oregon)	
Defiance County Children Services	Partners for Our Children (Washington)	
Doing Good Words (California)	Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (Pennsylvania)	
Exchange Family Center	People Places, Inc.	
Firefly Children and Family Alliance	Public Children Services Association of Ohio	
Florida Youth SHINE (Florida)	Rapid Resource for Families, Inc	
Foster Care Alumni of America	Rockland County Child Protective Services	
Foster Care Training Today	Safe Harbor Children's Advocacy Center	
Foster Family Alliance of North Carolina		
Foster Family Treatment Association (FFTA)		
Foster Forward (Rhode Island)		
Foster Greatness		