



Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Brianne K. Nadeau
Councilmember, Ward 1

Chairperson
Human Services Committee

**Statement of Introduction
Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Amendment Act of 2022**

July 13, 2022

Nyasha Smith, Secretary
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Smith,

Today, along with my colleagues Janeese Lewis George, Brooke Pinto, Christina Henderson, Robert White, and Mary Cheh, I am introducing the Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Amendment Act of 2022. This legislation has the potential to end homelessness for eligible youth aging out of foster care by taking advantage of the Family Unification Program Housing Choice Vouchers already available to the District through the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative.

Since October 1, 2020, only one person aging out of foster care in the District has reported anticipating living in their own apartment after aging out. And youth aging out in the District are just as likely to be homeless immediately upon leaving care as they are to be living on their own. These are the outcomes of a child welfare system that, rather than preparing youth to live independently, often refers them into the homelessness Continuum of Care.

That does not have to be the case. Under the Department of Housing and Urban Development's ("HUD") Foster Youth to Independence Initiative ("FYI"), public housing authorities can draw down non-competitive Family Unification Program ("FUP") Housing Choice Vouchers for youth leaving care who are at risk of homelessness on an as needed basis once they use up 90 percent of their FUP allocations. And under the recent Fostering Stable Housing Opportunity amendments, youth who participate in HUD's Family Self-Sufficiency program are eligible for five years of federal housing support.

In order for the District of Columbia Housing Authority ("DCHA") to provide that support, however, DHCA needs administrative backing from the Child and Family Services Agency ("CFSA"). Under FYI, local child welfare agencies must, among other things, identify potentially eligible youth within their caseloads, certify particular details about their child welfare histories to public housing authorities, and commit to providing supportive services for the duration of youths' voucher eligibility. If CFSA were to do those things, it could collaborate

with DCHA to substantially reduce, if not eliminate, homelessness for youth prepared to live on their own after aging out of care.

This legislation requires CFSA to do its part to make FYI vouchers a reality—and the norm—for youth leaving care. The Agency would be required to do everything in its power, including a list of enumerated actions taken directly from the HUD Notice establishing FYI, to secure FYI vouchers for eligible older youth. The bill does not require the Agency to pursue vouchers for youth who, perhaps because of disability, are unprepared to live on their own, youth who will be living in military housing or college dormitories, or youth who otherwise do not require “assistance securing a primary residence for independent living.” The bill narrowly prescribes a narrow course of conduct for a single agency. The effects of that conduct on the District’s most vulnerable youth, however, could be massive.

Together with the Preserving Our Kids’ Equity Through Trusts Amendment Act of 2022, also known as the “POKETT Act,” which I introduced last month, this legislation would create one of most robust safety nets for youth aging out of foster care in the United States. While the POKETT Act prohibits CFSA from using youths’ federal benefits to pay for the costs of care and creates a nest egg for eligible youth leaving care, this bill would ensure that youth can access up to five years of housing assistance. I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass this critical legislation.

Sincerely,



Brianne K. Nadeau
Councilmember, Ward 1
Chairperson, Committee on Human Services

1 Janeese Lewis George
2
3 Councilmember Janeese Lewis George

4 Christina Henderson
5
6 Councilmember Christina Henderson

7 Mary M. Cheh
8
9 Councilmember Mary M. Cheh

Brianne K. Nadeau
Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau

BE PINTO
Councilmember Brooke Pinto

Robert C. White, Jr.
Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr.

12 A BILL

13 _____
14
15
16 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
17
18
19 _____

20
21 To amend the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Act of 1977 to require the Child and
22 Family Services Agency to implement the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative.

23
24 BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this
25 act may be cited as the “Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Amendment Act of 2022”.

26 Sec. 2. The Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Act of 1977, effective September 23,
27 1977 (D.C. Law 2-22; D.C. Official Code § 4-1301.01 *et seq.*), is amended as follows:

28 (a) A new section 303g is added to read as follows:

29 “Sec. 303g. Housing for youth aging out of Agency custody.

30 “(a) When a youth who has left foster care in accordance with a transition plan described
31 in section 475(5)(H) of the Social Security Act, or who is within 90 days of leaving foster care in
32 accordance with a transition plan described in section 475(5)(H) of the Social Security Act, is at
33 risk of homelessness and requires assistance securing a primary residence for independent living
34 other than a college dormitory or military housing before, or within five years of, leaving foster

35 care, the Agency shall collaborate with the District of Columbia Housing Authority to take any
36 action necessary to secure for the youth a Family Unification Program Housing Choice Voucher
37 provided through the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative.

38 “(b) The Agency shall engage in any action required by the United States Department of
39 Housing and Urban Development to administer the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative in
40 collaboration with the District of Columbia Housing Authority, including, but not limited to:

41 “(1) Providing or securing any required supportive services for participating youth
42 for the duration of the youth’s use of a Foster Youth to Independence voucher;

43 “(2) Providing a written certification to the District of Columbia Housing Authority
44 verifying the youth’s child welfare history; and

45 “(3) Identifying any youth eligible for a Foster Youth to Independence Initiative
46 voucher within the Agency’s caseload and communicating the existence of eligibility to eligible
47 youth.”.

48 Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

49 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal
50 impact statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975,
51 approved October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

52 Sec. 4. Effective date.

53 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the
54 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as
55 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December
56 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of
57 Columbia Register.