



Department of
Job and Family Services

John R. Kasich, Governor
Cynthia C. Dungey, Director

October 16, 2015

The Honorable Julian Castro, Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Castro:

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) supports the proposed Foster Alumni Supportive Housing program (FASH). This Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) demonstration project would utilize promising strategies to address the high rate of homelessness among former foster youth. We are encouraged that six nonprofit organizations representing current and former foster youth, as well as organizations providing programs to homeless and struggling young adults, joined together to create the HUD-FASH proposal. ODJFS regularly partners with these organizations and provides financial support to the Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board (OHIO YAB). These organizations are held in high regard due to their quality services and continued dedication to youth and young adults who have come to the attention of the child welfare system.

The ODJFS, Office of Families and Children oversees the state's implementation of child welfare policies and programs. As such, the Office is responsible for ensuring that Ohio's foster children are provided with the safety, well-being and permanency they deserve. Former foster youth that age out of foster care face the same trials and tribulations as all young adults, with the added barrier of experiencing trauma in childhood and not having family supports to turn to when these young adults struggle as many young adults do. The Office recognizes that youth who have experienced foster care placements are at greater risk of homelessness throughout their lives. According to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, "one quarter of former foster youth experience homelessness within four years of exiting foster care."

Ohio's former foster youth would benefit from affordable housing, employment training, and supportive services. By identifying practices that can promote stable housing, social and emotional well-being, permanent connections and education and employment opportunities, we have an opportunity to provide stability and normalcy to these young adults so they have a chance at better outcomes.

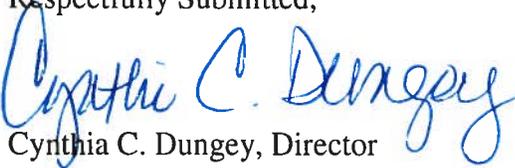
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As such, the Department supports programs that demonstrate specific efforts toward ensuring former foster youth receive appropriate services and supports in an effort to prevent homelessness. Providing affordable housing through a voucher rental assistance program will give foster care alumni the opportunity to have a safe and stable foundation while they participate in case management and clinical services to support self-sufficiency. Utilizing the Ohio Benefit Bank's Youth and Young Adults in Transition Universal Plan will assist case managers in preparing an individualized plan for each participant so their specific needs are met. The Ohio Benefit Bank also provides young adults with one location to access their birth certificate, Social Security card and medical documentation as they participate in services and supports.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal for a demonstration project. If there is any data or additional information we can provide to answer any questions you may have about Ohio's foster alumni or our current programs, please let us know.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia C. Dungey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Cynthia C. Dungey, Director