



## **The Foster Care to Homeless Pipeline**

### ***What does it mean to be an “aged out” foster youth?***

Youth enter foster care due to factors outside of their control, such as neglect, abuse and the death of a parent. If the system fails to connect them with permanent connections, these young people age out into the adult world without family support. Nationally, over 20,000 youth – including 1000+ Ohio youth – age out each year.

### ***What's the connection between foster care and homelessness?***

Youth who age out of foster care face many challenges during the transition to adulthood – but their greatest challenge is achieving housing stability. One in five will become homeless at some point during their lifetime. Stable housing is critical for youth to gain employment and pursue higher education.

### ***Why should we care?***

When children are removed from unsafe biological homes, the goal is to ultimately connect them with safe, permanent connections. After their parental rights are terminated, the government is the only legal parent that these children have. Statistics demonstrate that turning our backs on these children once they age out costs society \$300,000 per youth in social costs including public assistance and lost wages throughout each young person's lifetime.

### ***Why aren't current systems working to solve this problem?***

There is a lack of specialized services to engage and empower today's foster youth in acquiring and maintaining stable housing. Homeless shelters are not the right fit for young adults, because they have unique developmental needs. When teens first enter young adulthood after foster care, this is the most effective time to intervene in order to improve outcomes.

### ***How does it cost us to ignore the problem?***

Without intervention, the cycle will continue. The cost will be greater to society in terms of public assistance, because 1 in 4 chronically homeless adults is a former foster child. With the appropriate level of information and resources, foster care alumni can be empowered to attain educational and vocational training, and become future leaders and tax-paying citizens. They will have improved educational outcomes and higher earnings, which will lead to increased tax revenues.

### ***What's the solution?***

The *Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act* as proposed by Representative Michael Turner (R-OH) offers a bipartisan and cost-neutral method to move forward by connecting youth between 18-25 years old with housing opportunities. This bill has multiple co-sponsors, and will result in stable employment, improved educational prospects and self-sufficiency for foster youth alumni.