

July 19, 2018

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling  
Chairman  
House Financial Services Committee  
2129 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maxine Waters  
Ranking Member  
House Financial Services Committee  
4340 Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. Federal Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sean P. Duffy  
Chairman  
House Subcommittee on Housing and  
Insurance  
2129 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Emanuel Cleaver  
Ranking Member  
House Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance  
4340 Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. Federal Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: *Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act* (H.R. 2069) as amended to be introduced as an amendment in the nature of a substitute

Dear Congressional Members,

As foster care youth and alumni, we urge federal legislators to support the Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act. This bill is youth-driven in every sense, because the only reason it exists is that current and former foster youth volunteered their time for six years in a row to travel to DC and educate federal decision-makers about the Foster Care to Homeless Pipeline.

It makes no sense for our nation to be able to so clearly identify and anticipate this need, and not to proactively address it. For our population, the need for housing supports when we age out of foster care is entirely predictable. You know who we are, where we are, and at what date we will transition from the foster care system to adulthood.

This nation does not act upon the anticipation of foster youth homelessness until it's too late. Foster care youth and alumni deserve equal opportunities like our peers in society. Foster youth should have a system to fall back on. Finding housing during this time of transition is difficult, due to lack of a support system, lack of financial stability, and limited housing options. Even if we find initial housing, it can be difficult to maintain adequate funding and safe living conditions.

Not caring about this need comes with a price tag, and the biggest cost is missed opportunities. Lack of adequate transitional housing for foster youth is detrimental to our mental health, safety and self-sufficiency. When foster care youth chronically worried about shelter, food and safety, this can undermine our capacity to grow, and keep us in arrested development. Living in day-today "survival mode undermines our chances of achieving our goals for the future. Failing to care about the transitional housing needs of foster youth increases the risk that we will become chronically homeless in the future.

If our nation truly cares about ending youth homelessness, then our situation as foster youth is the very easiest situation in the nation to address - and this bill offers a clear way to address it. It is bipartisan, cost-neutral and relies on existing resources. If we assist in ending the Foster Care to Homelessness Pipeline, then we can help mold self-sufficient and contributing members of society.

We, in turn, pledge to help with efforts to help other homeless youth who do not come from our situation. Our firsthand experience has made us passionate about improving outcomes for foster youth, because we know what it's like to have literally no one to rely on. If you can address the needs of our population, which are entirely predictable and can be proactively addressed, that will free up future funding to assist other young people in need.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the foster care experience, housing challenges, or policy suggestions of any of us on this letter, please contact us via the Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board. The OHIO YAB is a statewide organization of young people (aged 14-24) who have experienced foster care, that exists to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that impact youth who have or will experience out of home care.

Our Youth Advisory Board members wrote this letter on Thursday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, and are currently circulating this letter as a nationwide petition so that foster care youth and alumni throughout the nation can individually share their concerns, needs and personal experiences regarding the Foster Care to Homeless Pipeline. The time to end this pipeline is now.

Thank you so much for your time, your work and your dedication,

Rayna Albino, Painesville, Ohio  
Ryan Bailey, Xenia, Ohio  
Chassidy Colella, Fremont, Ohio  
Autumn Coverny, Dayton, Ohio  
Asia Davis, Columbus, Ohio  
Mariah Dell, Toledo, Ohio  
Samatha Dillon, Athens, Ohio  
Sydney Dykes, Dayton, Ohio  
Aimee Ferry, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Alisia Flores, Xenia, Ohio  
Carlos Grayson, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Isaiah Griffin, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Troy Habe, Fremont, Ohio  
Stevie Hayslip, Xenia, Ohio  
Monarika Peterson Hedges, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Talia Holmes, Columbus, Ohio  
Shawn Ingle, Cincinnati, Ohio  
MeKaisha Jones, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Latia Kemp, Cincinnati, Ohio

Von'Celis Leonard, Dayton, Ohio  
Alex McHenry, Salem, Ohio  
Jayden Pinell, Fremont, Ohio  
Julius Rodriguez, Ashtabula, Ohio  
Herbert Rogers IV, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Samantha Roman, Dayton, Ohio  
Roman Sandhu, Lima, Ohio  
Evelyn Self, Fremont, Ohio  
D'Marco Shaw, Dayton, Ohio  
Justiynn Stoneknight, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Shane Tinsley, Toledo, Ohio  
Hannah Uhlinger, Lima, Ohio  
Louis Walker, Ashtabula, Ohio  
Weaver, Dakota, Ashtabula, Ohio  
Emily White, Toledo, Ohio  
Alan Wilson, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Emma Wirick, Fremont, Ohio  
Jay Wright, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Gabriel Young, Youngstown, Ohio