

## Montgomery County helped push national foster care law. Here's what it means.

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Congressman Mike Turner looks on as foster care youth advocate Jonathon Thomas speaks about how a change in law will impact future youth leaving the foster care system.

### Congressman, others say law assists youths aging out of foster care.

A new law that aims to help children in foster care systems across the country that “age out” of the system received praise Wednesday from county officials and the lawmaker who sought its passage.

Congressman Mike Turner, R-Dayton, spoke at Montgomery County Children Services and said that it was people here advocating a better way for the nation to handle children aging out of foster care that led to the change.

“This is one of those circumstances that in Dayton, Ohio, people said ‘This shouldn’t be this way. This should be changed.’ And by advocating on a national level, we’ve changed the law and foster children across the country are going to be impacted.”

The Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act mandates federal agencies set aside vouchers for housing for youths who age out of the system so that they no longer face homelessness, Turner said. He said a large number of young adults who age out of the foster care system end up homeless or with insecure housing. The bill, which was passed as part of the CARES Act, has requirements that the young adults must participate in training, work, or school in order to maintain the voucher, he said.

In Montgomery County, about 60 to 75 children age out of the system a year and about 350 have aged out of the system in the last five years, officials with Montgomery County Children Services said. In Ohio, about 1,400 children age out of the system a year.

“The voices in Dayton changed the voices in Washington D.C.,” Turner said.

During a press conference Wednesday morning, foster care children advocates spoke about how the new law will help those leaving the system. Cloe Cooper, who is a former foster care youth, said the change has been in the works for years.

“This life-changing legislation provides on-demand housing vouchers for young adults exiting foster care who are at risk of homelessness. It supersedes any barrier that once prevented our population from accessing this resource and gives former foster kids a chance to finally have a home of their own. Their chance to build a life they deserve.”

Also supporting the law Wednesday was Montgomery County Commissioner Debbie Lieberman, Doris Edelman with Action Ohio Youth Advisory Board, Jamole Callahan, director of training and development at ACTION Ohio, and foster care advocates Jonathon Thomas and Sydney Dykes.