

Support House Bill 4054: Help Foster Youth Succeed ***The Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood Act***

Challenge

Although Illinois allows young people to remain in foster care until their 21st birthday, some choose not to take advantage of this opportunity only to find that they are not prepared to “make it” on their own. House Bill 4054 would provide young people whose cases have been closed with a mechanism to re-enter the child welfare system and receive transitional services from DCFS.

Impact of House Bill 4054

Allowing re-entry would significantly improve their likelihood of long-term success by giving these young people another chance to complete their education and otherwise prepare for self-sufficiency.

Research Findings

One longitudinal study, The Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, has been following more than 700 young people from three Midwestern states, including 474 from Illinois, as they “age out” of foster care and transition to adulthood (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006). **Nineteen-year-olds from Illinois who had chosen to remain under the care and supervision of the state fared better than their counterparts who had not across a number of domains.**

- Young people were more likely to have a high school diploma or GED if they were still in care at age 19 (58 percent) than if they had exited (44 percent). They were four times more likely to be enrolled in a 2- or 4-year college at age 19 if they were still in care (38 percent) than if they had exited (9 percent).
- Thirty two percent of the young women who were still in care at age 19 had become pregnant since their initial interview compared with 62 percent of the young women who were no longer in care.
- Young people who had exited care were almost twice as likely to have been arrested, over three times more likely to have been convicted of a crime and two and a half times as likely to have spent at least one night “behind bars” since their initial interview than young people who were still in care at age 19.

In addition, the young people who were no longer in care at age 18 had experienced a number of adverse outcomes.

- Sixteen percent of the 19-year-olds who were no longer in care had been homeless at least once since exiting.
- More than half of the young people who were no longer in care had no health insurance.