

**CHALLENGES CONFRONTING OLDER CHILDREN
LEAVING FOSTER CARE**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

MARCH 9, 1999

Serial 106-26

Printed for the use of the Committee on Ways and Means



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

61-777 CC

WASHINGTON : 2000

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**CHALLENGES CONFRONTING OLDER
CHILDREN LEAVING FOSTER CARE**

TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 1999

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 p.m., in room B-318, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Nancy L. Johnson (Chairman of the Subcommittee), presiding.

[The advisory announcing the hearing follows:]

ADVISORY

FROM THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: (202) 225-1025

March 2, 1999

No. HR-2

Johnson Announces Hearing on Challenges Confronting Older Children Leaving Foster Care

Congresswoman Nancy L. Johnson (R-CT), Chairman, Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Ways and Means, today announced that the Subcommittee will hold a hearing on the challenges faced by older children who leave the foster care system. The hearing will take place on Tuesday, March 9, 1999, in room B-318 Rayburn House Office Building, beginning at 2:00 p.m.

Oral testimony at this hearing will be from invited witnesses only. Witnesses will include the Administration, former foster children, academic researchers, advocates, and representatives of State and nonprofit organizations providing youth services. However, any individual or organization not scheduled for an oral appearance may submit a written statement for consideration by the Committee and for inclusion in the printed record of the hearing.

BACKGROUND:

Under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, children in foster care are generally eligible for Federal maintenance payments only until age 18. Accordingly, each year an estimated 20,000 adolescents age out of foster care. These youths experience very unstable placements while in foster care with more than half experiencing at least three different placements and about 30 percent averaging nine years in foster care without a permanent living arrangement. As a result, within two years after leaving foster care, when most of these youths are about 20 years old, only half have completed high school, fewer than half are employed, only about 20 percent are completely self-supporting, and 60 percent of the young women have given birth, almost always outside marriage. Research also shows that these youths have very unstable housing arrangements and that nearly half of them have difficulty obtaining medical care. Members of the Subcommittee have introduced legislation, and the President has included a proposal in his fiscal year 2000 budget, designed to help these youths make the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency.

In announcing the hearing, Chairman Johnson stated: "I cannot imagine a more important issue of public policy than helping adolescents who have lived in foster care make the transition to adulthood. Research shows unequivocally that these youths experience tremendous difficulty with housing, jobs, education, nonmarital births, and physical and mental health. We simply must do more to help these young people."

FOCUS OF THE HEARING:

The major goals of the hearing are to gather additional information to clearly define the problems faced by adolescents aging out of foster care, to learn about successful programs that are now in operation around the country, and to solicit spe-

cific policy recommendations from a broad cross-section of experts, practitioners, and young adults who lived in foster care as adolescents.

DETAILS FOR SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN COMMENTS:

Any person or organization wishing to submit a written statement for the printed record of the hearing should submit six (6) single-spaced copies of their statement, along with an IBM compatible 3.5-inch diskette in WordPerfect 5.1 format, with their name, address, and hearing date noted on a label, by the close of business, Tuesday, March 23, 1999, to A.L. Singleton, Chief of Staff, Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, 1102 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. If those filing written statements wish to have their statements distributed to the press and interested public at the hearing, they may deliver 200 additional copies for this purpose to the Subcommittee on Human Resources office, room B-317 Rayburn House Office Building, by close of business the day before the hearing.

FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS:

Each statement presented for printing to the Committee by a witness, any written statement or exhibit submitted for the printed record or any written comments in response to a request for written comments must conform to the guidelines listed below. Any statement or exhibit not in compliance with these guidelines will not be printed, but will be maintained in the Committee files for review and use by the Committee.

1. All statements and any accompanying exhibits for printing must be submitted on an IBM compatible 3.5-inch diskette WordPerfect 5.1 format, typed in single space and may not exceed a total of 10 pages including attachments. Witnesses are advised that the Committee will rely on electronic submissions for printing the official hearing record.

2. Copies of whole documents submitted as exhibit material will not be accepted for printing. Instead, exhibit material should be referenced and quoted or paraphrased. All exhibit material not meeting these specifications will be maintained in the Committee files for review and use by the Committee.

3. A witness appearing at a public hearing, or submitting a statement for the record of a public hearing, or submitting written comments in response to a published request for comments by the Committee, must include on his statement or submission a list of all clients, persons, or organizations on whose behalf the witness appears.

4. A supplemental sheet must accompany each statement listing the name, company, address, telephone and fax numbers where the witness or the designated representative may be reached. This supplemental sheet will not be included in the printed record.

The above restrictions and limitations apply only to material being submitted for printing. Statements and exhibits or supplementary material submitted solely for distribution to the Members, the press, and the public during the course of a public hearing may be submitted in other forms.

Note: All Committee advisories and news releases are available on the World Wide Web at [HTTP://WWW.HOUSE.GOV/WAYS_MEANS/](http://WWW.HOUSE.GOV/WAYS_MEANS/).

The Committee seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-225-1721 or 202-226-3411 TTD/TTY in advance of the event (four business days notice is requested). Questions with regard to special accommodation needs in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats) may be directed to the Committee as noted above.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. The hearing will come to order. Good afternoon, everyone.

One of my highest priorities as I assume Chairmanship of the Human Resources Subcommittee, is to do more to help the 20,000 or so kids who are aging out of foster care. Like many Members of this Subcommittee and particularly my Ranking Member and

friend, Mr. Cardin, I have spent a lot of time thinking about the young people in the Independent Living Program. And I'm convinced that the world they enter now is far more complex than the world they entered 10 years ago and that the program ought to reflect that change.

There are two good reasons for our Subcommittee to work on the issues of children aging out of foster care. First, research conducted a decade ago by Mathematica, ongoing research by Professor Mark Courtney of the University of Wisconsin, and other studies show that within a few years of leaving foster care, young people have elevated rates of being the victims of violence, the victims of homelessness, of joblessness, of pregnancy outside of marriage, and of other distressing outcomes.

There appears to be unanimous agreement that this group of young people are at greatly increased risk of serious problems. This reason alone justifies concern and additional spending. But the pockets of success generated by the Independent Living Program deserve our immediate attention and our careful thought as to how we can spread the benefits of that approach.

There is a second reason for our concern. There isn't any one of us who hasn't either been both an adolescent and either parented or aunted or uncled adolescents and don't remember what a challenging and difficult time the years 18 to 21 are.

It is precisely this situation that most young people face. It is the most demanding and should, therefore, be a subject of concern to Congress and a good investment of public dollars.

We are looking for good ideas. Many have been presented. Some by Members of this Subcommittee, many by others. Certainly extending Medicaid coverage to age 21, allowing foster care maintenance payments to continue until age 21, providing money so States could pay a time-limited stipend to these young people. Those are amongst the ideas that have been put forward and are rational, and compelling.

But I urge our witnesses today to provide us with their ideas of what action Congress should take. And also the qualifications and the ramifications of how free should any new money be, how flexible. What is it? How does meeting the needs of these young people vary from State to State and town to town and district to district?

We are, of course, required to finance every program expansion we approve, and so at some time we will have to think through where do we get the resources to match the challenge in this area. But our purpose today is to get your thoughts on what is that challenge and how do we best meet it.

[The opening statement follows:]

**Opening Statement of Hon. Nancy Johnson, a Representative in Congress
from the State of Connecticut**

One of my highest priorities when I assumed chairmanship of the Human Resources Subcommittee was to do more to help the 20,000 or so children aging out of foster care. Like many members of this Subcommittee, I have spent time over the past two or three months reading about this problem, considering the Independent Living program, and trying to think of actions we could take to help these children make the transition from adolescence into adulthood.

There are two good reasons for our Subcommittee to work on the issue of children aging out of foster care. First, research conducted a decade ago by Mathematica, ongoing research by Professor Mark Courtney, one of our witnesses today, and several other studies show that within a few years of leaving foster care, young people have

elevated rates of being the victims of violence, of having been homeless, of joblessness, of pregnancy outside marriage, and of several other distressing outcomes. There appears to be unanimous agreement that this group of young people are at greatly increased risk for serious problems. This reason alone justifies public concern and additional spending.

But there is a second reason for our concern. All of us have been adolescents and most of us on this Subcommittee have been parents. If we think back to our own adolescence, or to that of our children, we can easily imagine how difficult life would have been if we had tried to negotiate the impossible years between 18 and 21 with little or no family support. Yet that is precisely the situation that most of these young people face. Again, I believe most members of Congress understand that helping these children is a good investment of public dollars.

So the Subcommittee is looking for good ideas. We have several good ideas in both Mr. Cardin's bill and in the proposal supported by the Clinton Administration. These ideas include putting more money in the Independent Living program, extending Medicaid coverage to age 21, allowing foster care maintenance payments to continue until age 21, and providing money so that states could pay a time-limited stipend to these adolescents. I urge our witnesses to provide us with their own ideas of what action Congress should take.

After this hearing, and a breakfast meeting among members that we are now planning, we will develop a bipartisan bill that Mr. Cardin and I will introduce. We will then solicit comments on that bill and hold a hearing to get reactions from a broad range of interested parties. It is my intention to then proceed to markup the bill at both Subcommittee and at the full Committee. My greatest concern is that under Committee rules, we are required to finance every program expansion that we approve. Thus, I hope we will all be able to match our desires to help this group of young people with our specific ideas about how to pay for our desires.

This is very important work and I am confident that within the next several months we will bring an excellent bill to the House Floor.

Ben, would you like to make an opening comment?

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I thank you very much for your leadership on this issue. I think it is noteworthy that the high priority Mrs. Johnson has placed on this issue is the fact that we have a hearing today, so early in this Congressional schedule, on children aging out of foster care.

So I applaud your leadership and thank you very much for this opportunity.

I think we should also note that it is snowing outside for those who may not know that. So we ask the indulgence of our guests here today that Members of our Subcommittee may be a little late or have trouble getting here because of the weather. We thank all of you for being here, and we certainly look forward to you, our witnesses.

I want to just underscore the point that Mrs. Johnson made, and that is recent studies have conclusively shown that children leaving foster care face many barriers to self-sufficiency, including lack of housing, poor employment opportunity, and inadequate opportunities for educational achievement, and, in many cases, the absence of health care coverage.

These aging foster care children have had a much more difficult time than children coming from other households. In many cases, the children have been abused, they have been neglected, they have been abandoned, they have been in one, two, three, four, five foster homes. Yet we expect them, when they reach 18 years of age, to be self-sufficient.

That's not realistic for any child, let alone one who has been in foster care. Along with my Democratic colleagues on the Sub-

committee, I have introduced the transition to adulthood program path to provide States with the option of extending Federal foster care assistance to youths between the ages of 18 and 21 if they are working, in training, or in school, and if they have a specific plan for self-sufficiency.

As is the case under the current foster care systems, States would be required to provide and match to receive extended funding under this legislation. It would also allow these youths to retain their Medicaid coverage. It expands the work opportunity tax credit to include all individuals who were in foster care the day before their 18th birthday.

It increases the amount of assets that children in foster care can save without impacting their eligibility for Federal IV-E maintenance payments. And, finally, the TAP proposal would update the funding formula for the current Independent Living Program to reflect the States' share of the national foster care caseload in 1996 rather than in 1984.

Madam Chair, we hope that this legislation, along with suggestions that have been made by the administration and other Members, will be the basis for us to work in a bipartisan way to provide ways in which we can provide for children aging out of foster care.

I might point with pride that on our hearing schedule today, we have Shauntee Miller, who is a student in Baltimore under the new Pathway Independent Plus Program. That's an example of the State, my own State of Maryland, that had provided help for children aging out of foster care.

I might add at 100 percent State support without the Federal Government as a partner. I think you will find that these types of programs have been extremely beneficial, and we need to expand those opportunities.

It is also a pleasure to have Carol Williams here, the Assistant Commissioner of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, who again has brought forward suggestions to improve our foster care programs.

Madam Chair, I along with you look forward to our witnesses and working with us come up with the appropriate Federal role for children who are aging out of foster care.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you, Mr. Cardin. I want to recognize Mr. English and Mr. McInnis, Members of the Subcommittee, pleased to have you here on time, and invite our first witness, Carol Williams, the Associate Commissioner, Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families of HHS to come to the witness table.

Thank you for being with us and you may proceed. Your full testimony will be submitted for the record.

STATEMENT OF CAROL W. WILLIAMS, ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER, CHILDREN'S BUREAU, ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Ms. WILLIAMS. Good afternoon. I'm pleased to be before you today to discuss how we can better help this special group of foster children, older children making the transition from foster care to adulthood. To address the needs of these children, the President's

budget for fiscal year 2000 proposes to expand the Independent Living Program, to authorize a demonstration program for transitional support for former foster children between the ages of 18 and 21, to increase the funding for the transitional-living program, and to encourage continued access to health care for young adults emancipated from foster care.

Many of the themes both of you addressed in your opening comments are very much reflected in this. We are pleased that the Members of this Subcommittee have also expressed an interest in increasing support for youngsters leaving the foster care system. And I hope that on this issue, like other issues we have explored together in the past, we will be successful in enacting bipartisan legislation.

Each year, 20,000 youngsters reach 18 and exit foster care without financial or emotional support of a family. As any of us who have raised children can attest, it is rare that a young person at age 18 is fully ready to be autonomous and self-sufficient, yet we hold this expectation for the young adults aging out of the foster care system.

I am reminded of a conversation I had with a young woman who had grown up in foster care, gone to college, and wondered in her first semester: Do I have some place to go back to on the holidays? Where will I be during spring break and the summers? Or was she really in a world all her own?

And she was then nearly 40 years of age but had acute and compelling recollection of her feeling of being in limbo. For many youths emancipated from foster care, the consequences of being left to fend for themselves at age 18 are quite grave. Studies show, as you have indicated, that only half of the youths who exit care have completed high school. Fewer than half are employed in the 2 years immediately after exiting care. Some experience homelessness. Sixty percent of our young women are pregnant prematurely, and only a small proportion are economically self-sufficient. Furthermore, many of these youngsters experience depression, isolation, and loneliness.

Last fall, I had the opportunity to spend time with a group of former foster care youths, and they talked with us about what they need to achieve self-sufficiency. They talked about the importance of having access to medical care, including mental-health services.

They talked about the critical need for education, continuing education and vocational training. They talked about the importance of having experiences that would prepare them for the world of work, including internships. And they talked about the dilemmas of housing and the need to have stable housing. They also spoke of needing to stay connected to the networks of support, including mentors and peers, that would help them through this period.

I believe that the administration's year 2000 budget takes an important step in addressing the needs well articulated by these youngsters.

The first component of our proposal is to increase the funding through the Independent Living Program by 50 percent. This program offers services to children in foster care 16 years of age or older, and it is designed to help young people make the transition to adulthood by helping them complete their high school education

or complete a GED or engage in vocational training; providing skills in the activities of daily living—budgeting, locating housing, finding a job—providing counseling, and coordinating other services.

Since 1992, the Independent Living Program has been funded at \$70 million annually. And those funds are allocated among the States according to a formula based on the 1984 population. We propose to increase that funding. That increase will allow us to expand the number of youngsters being served. It will allow us to increase the quality of service, and address the needs of underserved jurisdictions.

Our second proposal is to create a transitional support program for older youths. This addresses the need of youngsters to have some kind of base of economic support during those transitional years. Currently, these youngsters have no economic support. We propose to create a time-limited demonstration program for youngsters aging out of the system. The program would be funded at \$5 million in the year 2000 and grow by increments of \$5 million through the year 2003.

We want to provide health insurance for children leaving foster care. When children leave foster care, when their title IV-E eligibility ends, they also lose their Medicaid coverage. We propose to extend Medicaid coverage for this population through age 21.

In addition, we propose to increase discretionary funding for the Transitional Living Program, which is a program that serves homeless youngsters ages 16 to 21. We propose to increase it by \$5 million, from \$15 million to \$20 million in fiscal year 2000.

The President's budget outlines a sound set of policy initiatives to help youth leaving foster care to make the transition to healthy, productive lives as adults.

We recognize that there are other ideas that the Congress will also be considering. In particular, we would like to acknowledge Congressman Cardin for the leadership he has shown on this issue by introducing the transition-to-adulthood program of 1999. We are interested in working with all the Members of this Subcommittee to explore options to meet our common goals of assuring self-sufficiency for youngsters exiting foster care.

What we want for these youngsters is what we want for our own children, that they should be educated and well-prepared for the world of work, physically and emotionally healthy, economically secure, and supported through a network of caring relationships.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee. I'm pleased to take any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement follows:]

Statement of Carol W. Williams, Associate Commissioner, Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Madam Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee,

I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss how we can better meet the needs of a special group of foster children who have little visibility—older youth making the transition from foster care to adulthood. The President's budget for fiscal year 2000 outlines a series of proposals to address the needs of these youth. The budget proposes to expand the Independent Living Program; authorize a demonstration program of transitional support for former foster children between the ages of 18 and 21 (both of which proposals are within the jurisdiction of this Subcommittee); increase funding for the Transitional Living Program; and encourage continued ac-

cess to health care for young adults emancipated from foster care. We are very pleased that the members of this Subcommittee have also expressed interest in increasing support for youth leaving the foster care system. I hope that on this issue, like others we have explored together in the past several years, we will be successful in enacting bipartisan legislation.

We are proud that the Administration has been able to work in a bipartisan fashion with the Congress over the past several years to pass critical adoption, foster care and child welfare reform legislation. Together, we have enacted and are now implementing laws that make the health and safety of children our first consideration and that encourage timely decision-making on behalf of all children in foster care. We are also working to tear down barriers to adoption, whether based on racial discrimination, geographic boundaries or simply outmoded assumptions about which children are “adoptable.”

While we have accomplished a great deal, we have unfinished work remaining. We are making strides in increasing the number of children adopted from foster care. But we know that not all children needing permanent families will be adopted. Each year, nearly 20,000 young people in foster care reach the age of 18 and must enter adulthood without the financial or emotional support of a family. As any of us who have raised teenagers can attest, it is a rare young person who is ready on his or her 18th birthday to be fully autonomous and economically self-sufficient. We do not expect this of our own children. And yet, this is the burden we currently place on young adults aging out of the foster care system. I am reminded of the story a participant at one of our Kinship Care Advisory Group meetings told. This young woman spoke about how she had been raised as a foster child. When she turned 18, she went off to college. But she wondered did she have a family? Did she have a place to go home to on spring break? Or was she all on her own in the world?

For many youth emancipated from the foster care system, the consequences of being left to fend for themselves at the age of 18 are far more grave. Studies show that within two to four years of leaving foster care:

- Only half of these young adults had completed high school;
- Fewer than half were employed;
- One-fourth had been homeless for at least one night;
- Thirty (30) percent had not had access to needed health care;
- Sixty (60) percent of the young women had given birth;
- And, not surprisingly, less than one-fifth of these young people was completely self-sufficient.

Furthermore, many of these youngsters experience depression, isolation and loneliness.

Last Fall, along with the First Lady and others, I had an opportunity to hear from a group of former foster care youth. Among the things that these young people told us they needed in order to achieve self-sufficiency, stable living arrangements and mature relationships were:

- Medical services, including mental health;
- Education and/or vocational training;
- Employment preparation and opportunities, including internships;
- Transitional and/or supported housing; and
- Psycho-social support via mentoring, counseling and/or support groups.

The proposals in the Administration’s FY 2000 budget take an important next step in meeting the needs of young people who will be emancipated from the foster care system. I would now like to give a brief overview of our proposals.

Increase Funding for the Independent Living Program by 50 percent: The Independent Living Program, authorized by Section 477 of title IV–E of the Social Security Act, offers services to children in foster care who are age 16 or older. At State option, the program may serve both children who are eligible to receive Federal title IV–E foster care maintenance payments and youth in foster care supported through State dollars. States may also opt to serve children beyond the age of 18, up until the age of 21. All States and the District of Columbia have elected to exercise both of these options. The program is designed to help young people make the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency by:

- Helping participants to obtain a high school diploma, a GED or to participate in vocational training;
- Providing training in daily living skills, such as budgeting, locating housing, finding a job or planning a career;
- Providing individual or group counseling;
- Coordinating other social services available to the youth.

Since 1992, the Independent Living Program has been funded at \$70 million annually. Of this amount, \$25 million is required to be matched by the States. Funds

are currently allotted among the States based on a formula tied to the number of children in the State who were receiving title IV-E foster care maintenance payments in 1984.

We propose to increase funding for the Independent Living Program by 50 percent to a total of \$105 million annually. Of this amount, \$45 million would need to be matched by the States. The formula for distributing funds would also be updated, so that funds would be allocated to the States on the basis of their number of children receiving title IV-E foster care maintenance payments in the most recent year for which data are available to the Secretary. There would also be a hold harmless provision, assuring that all States would receive at least as much as they did under the old formula.

While funding for the Independent Living Program has remained constant since 1992, the number of foster children ages 16 and older has grown from approximately 62,000 in 1992 to over 77,000 in 1998, and we expect this number to continue to grow for at least the next few years. We believe that the substantial increase in funding we are requesting for the program is needed to enable the States to serve this growing population of youth and to increase both the quantity and quality of services that are provided. This is a crucial investment that we owe to youth in foster care to help them become productive members of society as they enter young adulthood.

Research tells us that the Independent Living Program's services can and do make a difference in the lives of young people. A 1990 study found that providing more comprehensive services, including teaching a combination of skills—money management, consumer and credit management, education and employment skills—helped youth to achieve better outcomes. Improvements in outcomes were seen in increased high school graduation rates, greater ability to maintain a job for at least a year, accessing appropriate health services, avoiding young parenthood and decreased dependence on public assistance programs.

It is important to highlight not only the importance of the direct services provided by State Independent Living Programs, but the creative linkages that these programs forge with other organizations in the public and private sectors in order to provide expanded opportunities for youth aging out of foster care.

- In Virginia, the Independent Living Program secures internships with private businesses, community organizations, hospitals, universities and others in order to provide participants with opportunities to develop skills, gain work experience and earn a stipend.

- In Texas, the State Independent Living Program has initiated a cooperative arrangement with State colleges to provide free college tuition to youth aging out of foster care.

These examples of collaboration and initiative translate into life-changing experiences for youth in foster care.

- Brenda was a child who first came into Texas' foster care system when she was 3 years old. She was later returned to family, but re-entered care when she was 13. She was enrolled in the Independent Living Program and through this experience had the opportunity to serve on the Statewide Youth Advisory Committee, which works to make life better for children and youth in foster care. After emancipation from foster care, she began college, with the help of the State's tuition benefit program for children aging out of foster care. She graduated from college in 1996 with a bachelor's degree in social work and subsequently worked for the State child protective services agency. She now works as a case manager with a private child-placing agency. In her professional and personal commitments, she has worked to improve the lives of children in foster care. Her goal is to enter law school and to advocate for the rights of children and youth.

Create a Transitional Support Program for Older Youth: While the Independent Living Program provides needed services to help youth and young adults gain skills and education that will help them to become independent, the program does not allow payments for room and board. Furthermore, foster care maintenance payments generally cease once youth reach their 18th birthday. Therefore, young people leaving foster care no longer have any source of economic support for basic living expenses.

We propose to create a time-limited demonstration program of competitive grants to States that would provide economic support to young people between the ages of 18 and 21 who were, until aging out of the system, receiving title IV-E foster care; who are enrolled in an Independent Living Program; and who have an independent living plan that includes participation in an educational or job training program. The program would be funded at \$5 million the first year in FY 2000, rising to \$10 million in FY 2001, \$15 million in FY 2002, and \$20 million in FY 2003. The program

would be evaluated to determine its effect in helping young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This initiative would offer young people a better chance to gain independence by assuring them of both economic and social support while they pursue educational or job training activities. A recent survey of transitional living programs, which provide similar types of services and supports to homeless youth, found that 74 percent of youth were discharged to stable housing and, six months after completing participation in the program, 78 percent remained free of all direct government aid.

In addition to the President's proposals for the Independent Living Program and the new Transitional Support Program for Older Youth, there are several other proposals in the budget that I would like to take a moment to highlight. While they do not fall within the jurisdiction of this Subcommittee, they are substantively related to assuring positive outcomes for youth leaving foster care.

Provide Health Insurance for Youth Leaving Foster Care: When foster care youth lose their eligibility for title IV-E foster care maintenance payments at age 18, they also lose their health insurance provided by Medicaid. The President's budget includes a proposal to allow the States to extend Medicaid coverage for these youth until their 21st birthday.

Increase Funding for the Transitional Living Program: The President's budget proposes to increase discretionary funding for the Transitional Living Program by 33 percent, from \$15 million in FY 1999 to \$20 million in FY 2000. The Transitional Living Program, authorized by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, provides grants to local community-based organizations to provide residential care, life skills training, vocational training, and other support services to homeless youth ages 16–21. While the Independent Living Program serves youth who are in the custody of State child welfare systems, the Transitional Living Program serves youth who are homeless, and not in the custody of any other service system. Sadly, this group of homeless youth includes many young people who suffered abuse or neglect at home, a small proportion of whom were previously in foster care.

The President's budget outlines a sound set of policy initiatives to improve supports to youth leaving foster care, in order to help them on the road to healthy, productive lives as adults. We recognize that there are other ideas that Congress will also be considering. In particular, we would like to acknowledge Congressman Cardin for the leadership he has shown on this issue by introducing H.R. 671, the "Transition to Adulthood Program Act of 1999." We are very interested in working with the members of this Subcommittee to explore all options that meet our common goals for youth aging out of foster care. What we want for these young people is really the same as what we want our own children—that they be well educated and prepared for the world of work, physically and emotionally healthy, economically secure, and supported through a network of caring relationships. To promote these positive outcomes we need policies and programs that help youth:

- To develop needed basic living, educational and vocational skills;
- To have access to financial support;
- To retain health insurance coverage; and
- To obtain stable housing and employment as they reach adulthood.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee. I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much, Ms. Williams. It is a pleasure to have you.

Why are you suggesting a time-limited demonstration program? We did it years ago, when Tom Downey was Chairman of this Subcommittee, included in a bill that I had made to allow Independent Living Programs to serve students up to 21, or young people up to 21. And many are. So we already have quite a lot of experience with just the kind of program that you are proposing to demonstrate. Why do we need to demonstrate it?

Ms. WILLIAMS. Let me just say that the Independent Living Program, which does in fact have a State option to go to serve young people up to age 21, does not allow, by statute, for any of those resources to be used to pay for the boarding care of youngsters. So that the time-limited demonstration is a demonstration of an addi-

tional kind of economic support for these youngsters in those circumstances where they have an independent living plan, they are engaged in the program, but they need support in order to pay the rent while they are in vocational training.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. That is true that they are not allowed to use independent living money for that. In fact, they are using other money. So we do actually have that model of a program out there.

Ms. WILLIAMS. Sure.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. So I think if we can look and see how widespread that model is and how it's working, it would help us to determine whether we need to demonstrate it or whether we just need to move.

Ms. WILLIAMS. We would be pleased to work with you on that.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Then, I did want to ask you about this transitional living program. Has any thought been given to just opening up the Independent Living Program to the group of kids that the transitional living program serves because most of them, I guess, are homeless. But they are not in the custody of the State.

But it seems to me that they are appropriate candidates. So I will raise that with some who follow. But it is odd that we have two programs that serve very much the same kind of young people.

Ms. WILLIAMS. I think the characteristics of the young people are very similar, but their relationship to the State agency is really quite different. We find a very small overlap between that group of children who are homeless, or immediately homeless, and the youngsters that are in foster care. So this is a broader group of youngsters who have left their home for a variety of reasons, usually familial conflict.

But you are absolutely right, they have not been dependent children of the court.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. To what degree do you and the Department of Education coordinate on the programming for these two groups of children?

Ms. WILLIAMS. The Transitional Living Program, authorized by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, is also administered in the Department of Health and Human Services by the Family and Youth Services Bureau, one of our sister agencies in the administration on Children, Youth and Families. We coordinate closely in administering the two programs. For instance, we have supported joint training activities for Independent Living Program administrators and Transitional Living Program grantees and we have jointly supported technical assistance resources. There is significant collaboration around the two programs at the State and local levels, as well.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you.

Mr. Cardin.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you very much for your testimony, and we very much appreciate the administration's initiatives in this area.

Let me follow up on this pilot program. You are suggesting that we commit \$50 million phased in, I guess, over 4 years.

Ms. WILLIAMS. That is correct.

Mr. CARDIN. And during that period of time, you have estimated that about 20,000 children age out of foster care every year. So during that period, I assume you have somewhere around 80,000 children that would be aging out of foster care. You have also indicated that the majority of these children now are having serious problems in the transition. I am just curious, with \$50 million of resources over the next 4 years, approximately how many children aging out of foster care would you expect to receive help under this pilot program?

Ms. WILLIAMS. I don't have the exact number before me, Mr. Cardin. I would be glad to provide that. But quite frankly, it is small proportion of the children aging out. And we actually were offering this proposal as a beginning place to really begin a discussion about the needs of these youngsters for a different kind of support.

Mr. CARDIN. Good. I am glad to hear you say that. I know that you don't want to wait 4 years while we work on this problem. We need to move aggressively, as the Chair has indicated.

We have a lot of information now. We need to know what are the best ideas in order to help.

We have heard a lot of different problems that children reaching 18 in foster care have, employment problems, health-insurance problems, educational opportunity, self-esteem. Could you tell us what you think is the number-one problem that we need to confront of that list or whatever list you think is needed. If we had to pick a priority on the list, or several priorities, how would you line them up?

Ms. WILLIAMS. Let me just say that I think that part of what we have learned from the Independent Living Program and its past evaluations is that these youngsters need a number of skills simultaneously, that the outcomes for them in terms of employment, in terms of completion of high school, in terms of their self-esteem, seem to increase better when there is a constellation of skills that is brought to bear for these youngsters at one time.

Those skills include education and employment, but in addition, the need to understand about the management of money, credit, and consumer activities. Those five skill sets together seem to promote self-sufficiency in these youngsters.

Mr. CARDIN. One of your recommendations is to give the States the option to cover the foster children aging out under Medicaid.

Ms. WILLIAMS. That is correct.

Mr. CARDIN. Do you have any indication as to whether the States would exercise this option?

Ms. WILLIAMS. We have not polled the States at this time. I think there is a felt concern about continuous health benefits for these youngsters among the people we work with most directly, which are the human service administrators. But we have not polled the States about their willingness to participate.

Mr. CARDIN. I think that might be helpful for us to know the States' attitude, what tools they would like to have, since they have—a lot of States have had initiatives in this area. It would be useful, I think, for us to know what the States would like to have, for us to give them the eligibility to include Medicaid and then for

very few States to follow up on it would be offering a little bit of a false hope.

I think it is a good suggestion, but I would like to know that there is an interest, at least, among the States for us to expand that issue.

And, last, there will be some witnesses later on that will be suggesting that we reduce the age for independent living services to 14, from 16 to 14. Now I am just interested as to your view since you are testifying first and won't have a chance to comment later, whether you think that would be useful for the independent living services to be available to foster children at an earlier age.

Ms. WILLIAMS. I have mixed feelings about it. On the one hand, I think that preparation for adulthood is something that we engage in with children throughout the course of their lives. I think that I would want to continue the focus of the Independent Living Program on youngsters 16 and over, but also, simultaneously, focus work with foster care providers and other care providers to make sure that they are establishing with kids the building blocks that will allow them to move to adulthood, at an earlier age.

Mr. CARDIN. How they do that if they can't use this program?

Ms. WILLIAMS. Well I think in most familial situations, we integrate that into the daily care of our children. And I would like to shore that up with foster parents and other group-care providers within the context of the programs and the services they currently provide to youngsters.

Mr. CARDIN. I'm not sure I fully understand that. I'm not sure I know what services—I understand how foster care, the program, works, but how, if we don't allow the independent living funds to be used, where would the programming be to help foster children in that regard?

Ms. WILLIAMS. I think that we have underutilized the opportunity to work with foster parents of children at a younger point, to make sure they have the kinds of experiences that prepare them for work in the context of family. We need to really begin working with those groups of parents before kids get to be 16, from the time kids are 11 to 12 on, foster parents could work with them around work issues, school issues, that kind of thing.

I think it could be a complement to the Independent Living Program.

Mr. CARDIN. And your reluctance to change the age from 16 to 14 is—

Ms. WILLIAMS. I think we need to improve both the scope and the quality of the services that we provide to the older kids. And it is a limited pot of resources. And so I don't want to dilute it as we are trying to improve the quality.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you.

Mr. English.

Mr. ENGLISH. Thank you, Madam Chair. And welcome, Ms. Williams. I have been listening with interest to your presentation. We are going to be hearing testimony later today that many of the skills emphasized in the Independent Living Program are soft, such as increasing self-esteem or improving relational skills, as opposed to hard skills, such as getting a job or getting into college.

In the President's proposal, is there any change in the menu of services or any priority given to the types of services that the Independent Living Program should be providing?

Ms. WILLIAMS. In our proposal, we have not changed the priorities. We do clearly expect preparation for work and continued education, with real expectation around completion of high school and GED and other vocational training as part of that program.

Mr. English, I would like to point out that many of these youngsters have had very disruptive childhoods. They have lived in various places. They have experienced troublesome interactions with their own parents and have been abused and neglected.

Often, the so-called soft skills are skills that are helpful to them in the workplace, but clearly, our expectations, even though we have a menu of skills, is around the transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency.

Mr. ENGLISH. Well said. The President's proposal will allow States to extend Medicaid coverage for these youth until their 21st birthday. As I look at that proposal, I wonder did the administration consider giving States a choice of either coverage through the CHIP program, the Children's Health Insurance Program, or through Medicaid?

Ms. WILLIAMS. We looked at both of those. Currently, under Medicaid, children must be covered through age 19—to age 19, excuse me, through the 18th year. And that is also true of the CHIP program. We were attempting to provide a broader transition to these youngsters to age 21. And there is a gap in terms of those current provisions and what we are proposing.

Mr. ENGLISH. I guess the other thing that interests me is probably a rather basic issue. Under the President's budget, he has proposed a significant increase in funding for the Independent Living Program, as you have noted, by over \$300 million over 5 years. I took a look at the President's budget; I didn't see any specific budget changes, savings that were specifically earmarked to cover that increase. Can you give us any insight and, if it comes down to this Subcommittee's recommendation, since it is in our jurisdiction, what sort of changes should be made to generate that \$300 million?

Ms. WILLIAMS. The President's budget has a number of cost-saving provisions within it. And we know we have to pay for this program, that this cannot be just new funds. And we are prepared to work with this Subcommittee to look at the ones that are currently in the President's budget and others that we might want to consider to pay for this.

Mr. ENGLISH. I thank you for that. And let me say that this proposal for an increase certainly has a lot of merit and you have been eloquent in arguing here for it. And I very much appreciate your testimony here today. We still are going to have some very difficult decisions to make, but certainly I hope that we have an opportunity to proceed on this proposal.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thanks.

Mr. LEWIS. OK. Thank you.

Ms. Williams, on this issue of a skills set, I appreciate your comments, and certainly for this group of kids, the old law is still relevant. But it is also true that we have kids coming out of high

school who are totally illiterate in terms of how to use a computer. I don't know how you get into the work force when you don't—even if you don't take a job that requires computer training, you just have to have a sense of technology. So I think we do have to look at the skills-set issue and what is most important to helping the young person feel a part of the workplace or feel comfortable in the workplace they are going to join.

As important as I think what are commonly referred to as the soft skills are, I think we have to take a little harder line and also provide more hard skills. I appreciate your thought about that as we move forward.

Ms. WILLIAMS. Yes, you know, I think what we want is youngsters who can enter the world of work, and that requires us to address the hard skills, but then to address soft skills to the extent that they get in the way of their ability to maintain themselves in the world of work.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much. Pleasure to have you here.

Ms. WILLIAMS. You are welcome.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Now I would like to call to the table some witnesses that we are particularly pleased to have with us: Elaine Nelson, who is a junior at Texas A&M, College Station, Texas, on behalf of the Orphan Foundation of Vienna, Virginia; Reggie Rollins, who is a student at Norwalk Community College, Norwalk, Connecticut, on behalf of the Connecticut Youth Advisory Board, and Shauntee Miller, a student at Baltimore Studio of Hair Design, on behalf of New Pathways Independent Plus Program, Baltimore, Maryland.

We are very pleased to have you all here today. If there is one thing we do respect, it's that if we construct a program and it doesn't help anyone, it's of no value no matter what its name sounds like on paper or how many dollars go out the door. So we are pleased to have you all here to share your experiences and thoughts with us.

And we hope, as we develop this legislation, that we will be able to get in touch with you if we have questions.

Ms. Nelson.

STATEMENT OF ELAINE KAY NELSON, STUDENT, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS, ON BEHALF OF ORPHAN FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

Ms. NELSON. Good afternoon, Congresswoman Johnson and distinguished Members of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources.

My name is Elaine Nelson. I am 20 years old and a junior biomedical science major at Texas A&M University. I will begin applying to medical school after this semester and will graduate cum laude in May of 2000.

I entered the foster care system in 1990 at age 12. During my senior year of high school I was advised to attend a 10-week PAL program, preparation for adult living. This course offered many benefits and assisted me to visualize independence from the foster care system. With less than 50 percent of foster children graduat-

ing from high school, I realized that, even with Independent Living Programs, something is missing from the system.

Ten weeks cannot make up for the years of little or no attention given to the preparation for independence. So the last year in foster care is extremely stressful. For the many foster kids that leave the system without the aid of a PAL program, no information on independent living is passed on. They are forced to leave the system without a support system and with no information on work ethics or college and vocational preparation.

Therefore, a primary goal for the entire foster care system, along with PAL, should be to continually prepare foster teens for their future.

Texas' PAL provided financial assistance and valuable adult-living techniques. Over a 10-week course, PAL provided each participant with \$5 at the end of each class session, which paid for gas to the session and possibly dinner on the way home.

At the completion of this course, each participant received a total of \$1,500, of which \$500 was allotted solely for the use of buying household or dormitory supplies, such as dishes, sheets, and things of that manner. The remaining \$1,000 was divided among 4 months, and was for the participant's personal use.

On top of this, PAL also reimburses college students for their first two semesters of books and supplies.

The second positive outcome was the actual lessons taught to the group. Issues such as applying for a job, buying a car, and balancing a checkbook were discussed. I was fortunate to have already experienced all of these endeavors, but I realized the value they held for those that were in need of this type of assistance.

Although the program had its advantages, it was also in need of some adjustments. First, more positive reinforcement should be placed on the students from the instructor. For example, one young girl's ambition was to become a topless dancer. Instead of offering suggestions for an alternative route, the instructor merely half nodded and remained silent.

I have seen countless foster children, including a previous foster brother, leave the system with absolutely no plans or goals, leading them to lives filled with sleepless nights, violence, drugs, and empty dreams.

I believe the ultimate goal of independent living classes should be to present to the students their many options such as the Job Corps program, university or community college enrollment, military service, or vocational opportunities. Once the student has chose a direction, the program should then be available to assist them in organizing and constructing their method for achieving this goal.

Second, the program provided no information on college admissions, Federal student financial aid, or private scholarships like the one I receive each year from the Orphan Foundation of America. I researched this information on my own instead.

During the summer of 1997, I spoke at a Texas PAL teen conference about my college experiences. I stressed the importance of the FAFSA, Federal Application for Financial Student Aid, and the urgency to complete it by the deadline. I was absolutely shocked as these high school juniors and seniors asked me question after ques-

tion about the form. It was disturbing that they had never been told about the fact the FAFSA, a form that plays the most crucial role in college funding for foster children.

If youth are unaware of the financial assistance that they are eligible for, they may assume that college is financially out of their reach and thus will not even apply.

I think I am an excellent example of a student who used her resources. I have been successful because I took advantage of what the system and the government offered. For those PAL participants planning a future in college or vocational school, more time should be spent utilizing these resources by filling out applications and financial-aid forms so that they too can have an increased chance of success.

I do believe that health insurance should be provided for foster youths until their completion of college or vocational school. Many former foster children, including myself, cannot afford a monthly health insurance payment while struggling independently with rent, groceries, and other bills.

I am fortunate as a student to have a reduced rate at the student clinic on the Texas A&M campus. However, many are forced to remain ill for extended periods of time or are forced to make a decision between going to a physician and paying their rent. No one should be faced with this type of conflict.

In conclusion, preparation for adult living and other similar programs are not only beneficial to foster teens but, I believe, essential. These programs hold enormous potential and could contribute so much more by including more volunteer programming, private-sector scholarships, like the Orphan Foundation of America, and interaction with religious establishments.

Independent Living Programs should be a principal way for foster youths to get a taste of a busy and unpredictable world and a great start to a future that holds enormous opportunity.

[The prepared statement follows:]

Statement of Elaine Kay Nelson, Student, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, on behalf of Orphan Foundation of America

Good afternoon Congresswoman Johnson and distinguished members of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources. My name is Elaine Nelson, I am 20 years old and a junior biomedical science major at Texas A&M University. I will begin applying to medical school after this semester and will graduate cum laude in May of 2000.

I entered the foster care system in 1990 at the age of 12. During my senior year of high school I was advised to attend a 10-week PAL program (Preparation for Adult Living). This course offered many benefits, and assisted me to visualize independence from the foster care system.

With less than 50% of foster children graduating from high school, I realize that, even with independent living programs, something is missing from the system. Ten weeks cannot make up for the years of little or no attention given to the preparation for independence. The last year in foster care is extremely stressful. For the many foster kids that leave the system without the aid of a PAL program, no information on independent living is passed on. They are forced to leave the system without a support system and with no information on work ethics or college and vocational preparation. Therefore, a primary goal for the entire foster care system, along with PAL, should be to continually prepare foster teens for their future.

Texas's PAL provided financial assistance and valuable adult living techniques. Over a ten week course, PAL provided each participant with \$5.00 at the end of each class session, which paid for gas to the session and possible dinner on your way home. At the completion of the course, each participant received a total of \$1,500.00, of which \$500 was allotted solely for purchase of household or dormitory

supplies, such as dishes, sheets, and cleaning supplies. The remaining \$1,000 was divided among 4 months, and was for the participant's personal use. On top of this, PAL reimburses college students for their 1st two semesters of books and supplies.

The second positive outcome was the actual lessons taught to the group. Issues such as applying for a job, buying a car, and balancing a checkbook were discussed. I was fortunate to have already experienced all of these endeavors, but I realize the value they held for those that were in need of this type of assistance.

Although this program had its advantages, it was also in need of some adjustments. First, more positive reinforcement should be placed on the students from the instructor. For example, one young girl's ambition was to become a topless dancer. Instead of offering suggestions for an alternative route, the instructor merely half-nodded and remained silent. I have seen countless foster children, including a previous foster brother, leave the system with absolutely no plans or goals, leading them to lives filled with sleepless nights, violence, drugs, and empty dreams. I believe the ultimate goal of independent living classes should be to present to the students their many options, such as the Job Corps program, university or community college enrollment, military service, or vocational opportunities. Once the student has chosen a direction, the program should then be available to assist them in organizing and constructing their method for achieving this goal.

Second, the program provided no information on college admissions, federal student financial aid, or private scholarships like the one that I receive each year from the Orphan Foundation of America. I researched this information on my own instead.

During the summer of 1997, I spoke at a Texas PAL teen conference about my college experiences. I stressed the importance of the FAFSA (Federal Application for Financial Student Aid) and the urgency to complete it by the deadline. I was absolutely shocked as these high school juniors and seniors asked me question after question about the form. It was disturbing that they had never been told about the FAFSA, a form that plays the most crucial role in college funding for foster children. If youth are unaware of the financial assistance they are eligible for, they may assume that college is financially out of their reach, and thus, will not attempt to apply. I am an excellent example of a student who used her resources. I have been successful because I took advantage of what the system and the government offered. For those PAL participants, planning a future in college or vocational school, more time should be spent utilizing these resources by filling out applications and financial aid forms so they, too, can have an increased chance at success.

I believe health insurance should be provided for foster youth until their completion of college or vocational school. Many former foster children, including myself, cannot afford a monthly health insurance payment while struggling independently with rent, groceries, and other bills. I am fortunate as a student to have a reduced rate at the student clinic on the Texas A&M campus. However, many are forced to remain ill for extended periods of time, or are forced to make a decision between going to a physician and paying their rent. No one should be faced with this type of conflict.

In conclusion, preparation for adult living and other similar programs are not only beneficial to foster teens, but I believe, essential. These programs hold enormous potential and could contribute so much more by including more volunteer programming, private sector scholarship organizations like the Orphan Foundation of America, and interactions with religious establishments. Independent living programs should be a principal way for foster youth to get a taste of a busy, unpredictable world and a great start to a future that holds enormous opportunity.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much, Ms. Nelson.

Mr. Rollins, it is a pleasure to welcome you here from Connecticut.

STATEMENT OF REGGIE ROLLINS, STUDENT, NORWALK COMMUNITY COLLEGE, NORWALK, CONNECTICUT, ON BEHALF OF CONNECTICUT YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

Mr. ROLLINS. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman Johnson, Congressman Cardin, Members of the House Ways and Means

Committee on Human Resources. My name is Reggie Rollins. I am a 21-year-old college student from Stamford, Connecticut.

I came into the care of Connecticut Department of Children and Families in 1989 at the age of 10. Life as a child was no fun for me at all.

How did I get to be a State kid. My mother—sorry. I became involved in the State because my mother was addicted to drugs and was unable to take care of me, my younger brother and sister. As my mother got more into drugs, the worse things got for the family.

At a very young age I was forced to act as a parent in my household and was responsible for looking out for my younger siblings. There were many times when there was no food or heat or electricity because our family income had gone to buy drugs.

It was because of this that the State had to step in to rescue us. Throughout my life, I have seen the good as well as the bad. When I went to the care of the Department of Children and Families, it was very difficult for me and my siblings. There was no place that could take us all, and we all split up in different foster homes.

After being responsible for making sure they were always safe, it was very hard not being able to see them more than once a month. For the first few years in care, I had a hard time adjusting to losing my family. I moved from foster home to foster home, and then when I got older, there was no more foster care. I began to move from group home to group home.

Luckily for me, quite a few years ago, I was placed at the Domus Foundation, a group home in Stamford, Connecticut. Domus rescued me and started me on my path toward independent living.

While at Domus, I learned all the things that would prepare me to live in the community. For one, the group home had life-skill classes where I learned about money management, transportation, cooking, and other skills I would need after I got on my own—excuse me.

Not only did I have life-skill classes, but our counselors would also bring in guest speakers from the community to teach us about life skills and bring us out and taking me for a few visits to sites where we could use the services.

For example, we learned about money management in classes, including topics like budgeting, savings, checking accounts, credit, consumerism, and so forth. Then someone from the consumer credit company in the community would come in and teach us about loans and credit. And they we would go visit local banks and set up savings and checking accounts.

There was always a lot of activities on hands and experience to help us learn and practice life skills.

Soon I was ready to move from the group home and to independent living. In Connecticut, we call it the CHAP Program, or the Community Housing Assistance Program. To be eligible for the CHAP, you have to be at least 17 years, you have to be under the State's care, willing to be in a full-time educational or vocational program, have completed a DCF-approved life skills program, work at least part time, and be willing to save at least 50 percent of your income from your job.

Independent living has been a great experience for me. I live in an apartment with my roommate Jeff, and we do everything from

paying the bills to washing dishes. The CHAP Program has given me a chance to practice all of the life skills I have learned at the group home before I went out on my own.

I set up a monthly budget with my case manager around rent, food, utilities, transportation, telephone, personal-care items, and then the State sends me a check once a month to meet all of the budget costs.

My case manager stops by to see us a couple times a week to make sure we are paying our bills, keeping the apartment together, and making all of our goals. I love being in my own apartment. Independent living has given me a great opportunity to become a great member of the community.

Another program I really enjoy is being part of the Connecticut Youth Advisory Board. Through the advisory board, I have been able to have my voice heard in many different functions. I am a member of the southwest's region advisory board and also am a member of the statewide Youth Advisory Board that meets with the commissioner.

The regional youth advisory board consists of eight different youth ages. All come from the southwest part of our State.

We meet together once a month and we talk about things in our system we feel should be changed. Our regional group currently has three projects we are involved with. One is a youth survey to get feedback from other kids in care as to how they see life in the system.

Another project is a raffle to raise money to began a scholarship fund. And finally, we made a video to tell other young people about the Youth Advisory Board and how to get involved.

The statewide Advisory Board consists of 10 youth, two from each regional board. The group meets four times a year with the commissioner. Commissioner Kris, as we call her, really listens to what we have to say, and this year she changed two policies around college tuition and services to teen parents based on what we had to say.

Not only have I been enjoying a youth leadership role in my State, but I also attended the National Independent-Living Conference representing my State. In December, I went to Florida to do a workshop with the State mental health commissioners on how to develop a youth advisory board in their States.

In closing, I want to thank Congresswoman Johnson for the opportunity to speak with you. I want you all to know that if you give us the resources and opportunity, we can turn out all right. Thank you.

[The prepared statement follows:]

**Statement of Reggie Rollins, Student, Norwalk Community College,
Norwalk, Connecticut, on behalf of Connecticut Youth Advisory Board**

Good afternoon Congresswoman Johnson, Representative Cardin and members of the House Ways and Means' Subcommittee on Human resources. My name is Reggie Rollins and I'm a 21 year old college student from Stamford, Connecticut. I came into the care of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families in 1989 at the age of 10. Life as a child was no fun for me at all. How did I get to be a "state" kid? I became involved with the state because my mother was addicted to drugs and was unable to take care of me, and my younger brother and sister. As my mother got more into drugs, the worse things got for my family. At a very young age I was forced into acting as a parent in my household and was responsible for looking out for my younger siblings. There were many times when there was no food, or heat,

or electricity, because our family income had gone to buy drugs. It was because of this that the state had to step in to rescue us.

Throughout my life I've seen the good as well as the bad. When I went into the care of the Department of Children and Families it was very difficult for me and my siblings. There was no place that could take all of us and we were split up into different foster homes. After being responsible for making sure they were always safe it was very hard not being able to see them more than once a month. For the first few years in care I had a hard time adjusting to losing my family. I moved from foster home to foster home, and then when I got older and there was no more foster care, I began to move from group home to group home.

Luckily for me a few years ago I was placed at the Domus Foundation group home in Stamford, Connecticut. Domus rescued me and started me on my path towards independent living. While at Domus I learned all the things that would prepare me to live in the community. For one, the group home had life skills classes where I learned about money management, transportation, cooking and other skills I would need as I got out on my own. Not only did I have the life skills classes but our counselors would also bring in guest speakers from the community to teach us about the skills and then bring us out into the community for field visits to sites where we could use the service. For example, we would learn about money management in class, including topics like budgeting, savings and checking accounts, credit, consumerism, etc. Then, someone from a consumer credit company in the community would come in and teach us about loans and credit, etc. And then we would go visit the local bank and set up savings and checking accounts. There were always a lot of activities and hands on experiences to help us learn and practice life skills.

Soon I was ready to move from the group home into independent living. In Connecticut, it's called the CHAP program, or the Community Housing Assistance Program. To be eligible for CHAP, you have to be 17 or older; you have to be under the state's care; willing to be in a full-time educational or vocational program; have completed a DCF approved life skills program; work at least part time; and be willing to save up to 50 percent of your income from your job. Independent living has been a great experience for me. I live in an apartment with my roommate Jeff and we do everything from paying the bills to washing the dishes. The CHAP program has given me the chance to practice all of the life skills I learned at the group home before I'm really out there on my own.

I set up a monthly budget with my case manager around rent, food, utilities, transportation, telephone and personal care items and then the state sends me a check once a month to meet all of the budget costs. My case manager stops by to see us a couple of times a week to make sure we're paying our bills, keeping the apartment together, and meeting all of our goals. I love being in my own apartment. Independent living has given me a great opportunity to become a member of the community.

Another program I really enjoy is being a part of Connecticut's Youth Advisory Board. Through the advisory board I have been able to have my voice heard at many different functions. I'm a member of the Southwest region's advisory board and I'm also a member of the statewide Youth Advisory Board that meets with the Commissioner.

The regional youth advisory board consists of eight youth of different ages that all come from the southwest part of our state. We meet together once a month and we talk about things in the system we feel should be changed. Our regional group currently has three projects we're involved in. One is a youth survey to get feedback from other kids in care as to how they see life in the system. Another project is a raffle to raise money to begin a scholarship fund. And finally, we made a video to tell other young people about the Youth Advisory Board and how to get involved.

The statewide advisory board consists of 10 youth, 2 from each regional board. This group meets four times a year with the Commissioner. Commissioner Kris as we call her, really listens to what we have to say and this year she changed two policies around college tuition and services to teen parents based on what we had to say.

Not only have I been enjoying a youth leadership role in my state but I've also attended the national independent living conferences representing my state. In December I went to Florida to do a workshop with state mental health commissioners on how to develop youth advisory boards in their states.

In closing, I want to thank Congresswoman Johnson for the opportunity to speak with you. I want you all to know that if you give us the resources and the opportunities, we can turn out all right.

Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Miss Miller.

**STATEMENT OF SHAUNTEE MILLER, STUDENT, BALTIMORE
STUDIO OF HAIR DESIGN, ON BEHALF OF NEW PATHWAYS
INDEPENDENT PLUS PROGRAM, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND**

Ms. MILLER. Dear Madam Chair, Mr. Cardin, and other distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Shauntee Miller and I will be 20 years old in 2 days. I live in Baltimore in an apartment as a resident of New Pathways.

New Pathways is a semi-independent living program that is helping me get ready for the real world. At the age of 16, I had my daughter Alexis while living with my mother. Unfortunately, I had to call protective services when we were being evicted because it was the only way to keep Alexis and me safe.

My daughter and I went into two foster homes in a 1-year period. When I was 17, Alexis and I were separated and placed in separate foster homes, and it became very difficult for me to see my daughter. When I was 18, I went to live with my aunt. But when I was there, it was overcrowded and nobody respected my space. They wanted too much money for rent, and I always had to take care of everybody else's responsibilities. I had no time to take care of my responsibilities. When I turned 19, a year ago, I decided to move into New Pathways program to help me become more independent.

After a week, I changed my mind because my brother had just recently died and it wasn't a great time for me to go out on my own. So I moved back into my aunt's house.

In January of this year, I made a decision to go back into New Pathways because I needed to be able to worry about my responsibilities. These responsibilities are my daughter, my school, my job, and myself.

New Pathways allows me to be on my own in an apartment where other people don't put their responsibilities on me. I am able to feel safe, have my own space and some privacy. I am able to see my daughter every weekend. I go to cosmetology school and work nights so that I can save money. I am able to make my goals a priority.

My goals are to complete school, move out on my own, and reunification with my daughter, Alexis.

When foster kids turn 18 we still need some support to manage all of our responsibilities. We don't want everything given to us, but having assistance with housing money and medical care while we are in school is very important. New Pathways allows me to be independent, but at the same time gives me some support and guidance and an occasional push if I need it.

It makes me proud that my Congressman, Mr. Cardin, is responsible for this bill. I want to thank him for his commitment to young adults like myself who are trying hard to be successful.

I hope that all of the distinguished Subcommittee Members realize that we are not looking for a free ride, just a little assistance while we go to school and try to put away some money.

Thank you. Thank you all for your time and for this opportunity to represent young adults like myself.

[The prepared statement follows:]

Statement of Shauntee Miller, Student, Baltimore Studio of Hair Design, on behalf of New Pathways Independent Plus Program, Baltimore, Maryland

Dear Madame Chair, Mr. Cardin and other distinguished members of the committee,

My name is Shauntee Miller, and I will be 20 years old in two days. I live in Baltimore in an apartment as a resident of New Pathways. New Pathways is a semi-independent living program that is helping me get ready for the “real” world. At the age of 16, I had my daughter, Alexis while living with my mother. Unfortunately, I had to call protective services when we were being evicted because it was the only way for me to keep Alexis and me safe. My daughter and I went to 2 foster homes in a one-year period. When I was 17, Alexis and I were separated and placed in separate foster homes, and it became very difficult for me to see my daughter. When I was 18, I went to live with my aunt, but when I was there, it was overcrowded, nobody respected my space, they wanted too much money for rent, and I always had to take care of everybody else’s responsibilities. I had no time to take care of my responsibilities.

When I turned 19 a year ago, I decided to move into New Pathways’ program to help me become more independent. After a week, I changed my mind because my brother had just recently died and it wasn’t a great time for me to go out on my own, so I moved back to my aunt’s house. In January of this year, I made a decision to go back into New Pathways because I needed to be able to worry about my responsibilities. These responsibilities are my daughter, my school, my job, and myself. New Pathways allows me to be on my own in an apartment where other people don’t put their responsibilities on me. I am able to feel safe, have my own space and some privacy. I am able to see my daughter every weekend. I go to cosmetology school and work at nights so that I can save money. I am able to make my goals a priority. My goals are to complete school, move out on my own, and reunify with Alexis.

When foster kids turn 18, we still need some support to manage all of our responsibilities. We don’t want everything given to us, but having assistance with housing, money and medical care while we are in school is very important. New Pathways allows me to be independent but at the same time gives me support and guidance, and an occasional push if I need it.

It makes me proud that my Congressman, Mr. Cardin, is responsible for this bill. I want to thank him for his commitment to young adults like myself, who are trying hard to be successful. I hope that all of the distinguished committee members realize that we are not looking for a free ride, just a little assistance while we go to school and try to put away some money.

Thank you all for your time and for this opportunity to represent young adults like myself.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Well, thank you very much. I would have to say I am extremely impressed with each of you, with what you have done in the face of tremendous odds that would have defeated many. It is indeed a shocking comment on our society that we have, over so many years, given adults with children on welfare stipends, health care, and a lot of education and counseling support as they faced the transition, and been so utterly insensitive to what it must have been like during that last year in a foster home.

So I think one of the things that you have brought out very clearly is that every child in foster homes needs to have this kind of support that you all received through the life-skills program, independent living type program in your State.

What do you think about—two issues. First of all, what do you think about the inclusion of younger people who are in the foster

care system and who are in foster homes, in the kinds of meetings that you have been a part of and, therefore, developing those supportive friendships that are so important? And what do you think about the kinds of skills that have been offered.

Your comments, Ms. Nelson, about the lack of attention to financial resources were very well taken. And when I look at what Mr. Rollins is doing down there in Norwalk—you know, last year, we passed this Hope Scholarship Program. Last year we put more money into higher education subsidies than we have in any 1 year since the GI Bill. But if we don't educate people about that, how can they possibly know.

Ms. NELSON. Right.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. And a lot of the money comes through tax credits. So we need to know how do you combine work and school in such a way that actually you can do it without building up any debt. But certainly the more tools we put out there, the more need there is for education and assistance so that people can see what the opportunities are.

I wonder whether any of you in the programs that you are in were able to gain particular understanding of what your career choices were? What it might feel like if you went into one career versus another career? Were you given any encouragement in thinking about what your career ought to be.

You know, we all make choices about a career, and then we change them throughout our lifetimes, but was career education and exploration very much a part of the programs you participated in?

Ms. NELSON. It wasn't in mine. They never once talked to us, [cough] excuse me. They went around the room and asked what each of our goals were, but no real emphasis—excuse me—was placed on training for the future. Basically, you know, each person said their piece and there was feedback from the instructors.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. How about you, Mr. Rollins?

Mr. ROLLINS. No. They just basically asked us what our goals are and that's about it.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Ms. Miller.

Ms. MILLER. Could you repeat the question?

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Did you, for instance, decide to go into cosmetology because it was something that you saw other people doing and knew about, or was there any effort in the program you participated in to expose you to a lot of different choices and you chose that?

Ms. MILLER. Well, they offered me the chance for—well, cosmetology was something I was good at. So I chose it, and they are able to help me do it. So—

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Good. I was part of a program that was trying to help kids see what career options were available, and when we took kids from my hometown up to the airport, which is only about 25 minutes away, not one of them had ever seen the inside of a plane, nor thought about all the kinds of jobs—that are involved—stewardess, airplane pilot repair, baggage, tickets—and there is just a whole world of possible careers in an airport. And there is a whole world of possible careers if you visit

a hospital from physician right on down to many, many interesting lab careers.

You go out to some of the construction sites, and there are just all kinds of jobs from entry-level to very high-paying equipment jobs. You go into manufacturers now and they have much better training opportunities and high-paying supervisory jobs on the floor for women and men, earning \$50,000, \$60,000 a year.

So, I think that though this is an old program, that we do need to think. And I hope that, in the next few days, you will think—what would I really like to have known? What would have helped me think about what are all the choices out there? Because of all the kids in the world, those who grew up in the circumstances you did, need to have a little extra help in seeing what are the various horizons, what are the roads and the paths one can choose.

None of us stay necessarily in the path we choose when we are 18 or 20 or 40 or 60, but you do need to be able to go down a path with a sense of choice and enthusiasm.

So I appreciate your being here together today. Thank you all for your excellent testimony. And now I want to recognize Mr. Cardin.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you, Madam Chair. First, let me congratulate each of you for what you have been able to achieve and what you are going to be achieving in your life. I also want to thank you for coming here to testify. It is not easy.

I don't know if many of us at your age could have had the poise and had the preparation to be able to come before Congress and talk about your own experiences. So I want to thank you for that very much, and really tell you how important it is for us. We see the numbers, 20,000 children each year in foster care, but now we see three, and we see the faces and we see the experiences, and we learn a lot more by your personal presence here. So thanks for braving the weather, and thanks for being prepared, and being willing to come forward. It makes our job a lot easier.

I am curious as to how the three of you would have—what would have happened to you or people that you know, if there wasn't a PAL program, or you didn't have the program in Connecticut, the Domus Foundation, or the program we have in Maryland, New Pathways?

If those programs weren't available, how would you—what would you do at age 18? What would happen at age 18 without any help for housing or assistance? What happens to foster children?

Ms. MILLER. They will probably drop out of high school to get a job and make it on their own.

Mr. CARDIN. So you would have dropped out of school and done the best that you could?

Ms. MILLER. Most likely that is what I see.

Mr. ROLLINS. I probably would have finished school and learned experiences as I went on, you know. And whatever happens, happens from there basically. I would try, you know, differences, as far as I can get to the value for myself.

Mr. CARDIN. What would have happened at 18, if you didn't have any help?

Ms. NELSON. Well, PAL really—PAL in Texas really didn't prepare me any more for what I was already, you know, what I al-

ready knew was going to exist. So I think it could be a lot stronger than it was. It really didn't focus on the skills that I needed.

Mr. CARDIN. Texas has an educational assistance program for children coming out of foster care?

Ms. NELSON. They have a tuition and fee waiver if you go to any State-supported public school. And that is just tremendous, that's a tremendous help. But they don't have an actual—other than the PAL program, I'm not aware of any other services.

Mr. CARDIN. Did you take advantage of that tuition assistance, or—

Ms. NELSON. Oh yes. I still am. Oh yes. Yes, there is just a form that my PAL coordinator actually sends me. If it is updated. She sent me one my freshman year, and I just give that to the admissions.

Mr. CARDIN. Now, if that was not available, what would have been your educational opportunities?

Ms. NELSON. Well, I still get financial aid from the fact of filling out Federal aid. It would have been a lot harder to pay for school. I mean, that is a big chunk money to pay for, you know, tuition and fees. And so, I think I would have still been OK with Federal aid, but the tuition and fee waiver is tremendous.

Mr. CARDIN. I understand that Connecticut has a requirement that you have to save some money?

Mr. ROLLINS. Fifty percent of your check, income.

Mr. CARDIN. Are you doing it?

Mr. ROLLINS. To some extent. [Laughter.]

Mr. CARDIN. You are like all of us, huh? We are trying to help you save. How about the others? Are you able to save any money?

Ms. NELSON. Yes. I really don't have a choice, I mean. I really think it would be great if we had something like that. It would make us.

Mr. CARDIN. Ms. Miller, are you able to save any money?

Ms. MILLER. Yes, I am.

Mr. CARDIN. Pardon?

Ms. MILLER. Yes.

Mr. CARDIN. Good. Well, that is important. We want you to continue. They are good life skills to realize there are going to be times that you are going to have to go into that savings. And we expect that we are going to make it easier for you to do that.

Again, let me just thank you all for being here and sharing your experiences with us.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. English.

Mr. ENGLISH. Thank you. And welcome. All of you are the product of different, Independent Living Programs. What would you say was the most important single skill you got out of that participation?

Ms. Miller, is there one single skill that you particularly prize that you got from participating in this program?

Ms. MILLER. Well, New Pathways has helped me to accomplish my goals or to try to reach them.

Mr. ENGLISH. A focus, maybe?

Ms. MILLER. Yes.

Mr. ENGLISH. What about you, Mr. Rollins. What was the most important single skill you got?

Mr. ROLLINS. Budgeting.

Mr. ENGLISH. Budgeting.

Ms. Nelson.

Ms. NELSON. I would imagine budgeting would probably be the best skill they taught me.

Mr. ENGLISH. Great. Is there anything that you would change or add to these programs, just off the top of your head? Ms. Miller. Beyond your previous testimony?

Ms. MILLER. Yes. I would add to the program that if we have children, that they would allow us to have overnight weekend visits.

Mr. ENGLISH. OK.

Mr. Rollins.

Mr. ROLLINS. I probably would change the classes, like I said before: start at an early age. Try to keep siblings together too, because, as it happens, they are always split apart from each other.

Mr. ENGLISH. Ms. Nelson, you have already given some ideas of how you would like to see changes, do you want to encapsulize them or add anything?

Ms. NELSON. Yes. I really think volunteers could make a huge difference in Independent Living Programs. And I never met a volunteer until after I graduated from high school, until after I left the foster care system. And it just kind of gave me a sense that someone is really going to stay there and help because if people are being paid to work in the system, you realize that when you turn 18 they are just going to move on to the next child; whereas, if a volunteer was part of PAL or any other Independent Living Program, then they would stay with you for the rest of your life if you both chose.

So, I think that is a huge—that would make a huge impact.

Mr. ENGLISH. That is well said. And, again, I appreciate all of you taking the time to come and share these thoughts with us.

Madam Chair, I will yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you.

Mr. Watkins.

Mr. WATKINS. Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to share with the panel that I agree with the other Members of Congress who congratulated you on being articulate and expressing yourself. I think my colleague from Maryland expressed it. When I was your age I don't think I knew what a Congressman was, let alone come before Congress and testify.

But on the last question Mr. English asked. Would you consider being a volunteer?

Ms. NELSON. Oh, definitely.

Mr. WATKINS. After you finish up, you get into the mainstream? I think you can have a great influence because you're articulate individuals and through the program you have gained a lot of experience that you can express and share. It goes right back to realizing you are a volunteer. You are a volunteer. You have gone through the program, so to speak, and you have had good results. Do you feel that strongly about it?

Ms. NELSON. I do. I think, especially, I think we would be especially good volunteers because we have been through it. And I think we could contribute so much more.

Mr. WATKINS. I would like to encourage you to do so. I would like to encourage you also not to sell your life short. Mrs. Johnson was discussing your career. I'm a father of a foster child. My wife and I had our homes licensed for a number of years, and whatever money we received from the State DHS, we kept their dollars in reserve to help each foster child go through school. For 11 or 12 months and we had a young lady named Sally that came to us, and we ended up adopting her. She is 15 years of age. She was part Cherokee Indian. And she has been a real blessing.

I thought as a daddy—now, all you ladies don't get this wrong, all right—but I thought as a daddy when she got ready to go to college, she should go and major in home economics, you know. [Laughter.]

She couldn't go wrong, right? As a daddy, she couldn't go wrong with home economics. Sally came home her freshman year from college and she said, "Daddy, if you don't let me major in agriculture, I'm going to quit."

I didn't know what she was going to do in agriculture as a young lady. However, I'd like to share with each of you that Sally is a very professional woman in her own right. She is a lover of horses. She has given us our first grandchild, named Rena Cheyenne, and I am very proud of her. She is very, very professional and doing well in her life. And I just want to encourage you. She can share a great deal as well as a lot of you can along the way.

And so when you think about the program you have, I hope you will share it with others because each of you can be a role model to help others in life.

You may not have your career just picked out right now, but I encourage you to go ahead and to continue to seek a direction, a career. Hey, I majored in agriculture myself, you know. Here I am from U.S. Human Resources Subcommittee here in the program, but through the experience I have had in foster care programs or other programs—and they have advanced now a whole lot since our Sally came along.

And so, Madam Chair, I am impressed with these young people, and I think they can have a tremendous positive influence on the lives of a lot of other people as they walk through life.

Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much. I want to just ask one closing question. You know, the proposals we have before us suggest two different courses. They are not mutually exclusive, but I just wonder what you think about them? Some of the programs in the States do provide stipends, not with Federal money but with State and other money, and certainly we are going to look at that, opening up the law so that the money in the Independent Living Program can be used for stipends. But there is also the suggestion that it might be used for foster care payments, where the foster care family and the young person want to stay together so the young person can continue to live in that home until 21.

Now, do you think those alternatives are equally valuable?

Ms. MILLER. Yes.

Mr. ROLLINS. Yes.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Well, for instance, if you could have stayed at Domus?

Mr. ROLLINS. Domus, yes.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. At Domus from 18 to 21, which I guess you couldn't, right?

Mr. ROLLINS. No.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Yes. Would that have been a good thing to do, and over not the whole number of years, but not having the hammer of age 18 as a cut-off—being able over those years to transition more slowly from a foster care setting? Is that useful?

Mr. ROLLINS. It would have worked. And it would have been easier to save money, too, that way. And I would have less bills to pay that way and more time to develop myself too.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Right.

Ms. NELSON. I think it all depends on the situation. I don't think all foster kids are just—you know, there are those foster kids that are ready to get out of the system. They are ready to go live in the dorm at college. And I think those maybe should be separated from those that really need the time to adjust.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Right.

Ms. NELSON. So I think it would be a good thing to have the choice to stay, but I think it really all depends on the foster parents and the relationship with their foster child.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Well, hopefully, you don't want the State making this decision for you, and you certainly don't want us making it for you.

Ms. NELSON. Right. I think there should be an option. If it's there at 18, you are free to leave, but if you need to stay—especially, you know, if you are in college and, like she was saying, the previous speaker, if they do need somewhere to stay, you know, for the holidays that option is there.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Were you nervous about testifying today.

Ms. MILLER. Yes.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Well, let me tell you. I am glad you were nervous because I still get nervous before every debate and every major speech I make. And you know what, if I didn't get nervous, it would be time to quit. Because you don't do your best work unless you are a little nervous. It is like before a football game or any other thing. You gotta get up for it.

So I am glad you were nervous, I'm glad you were worried, and I want you to know you did very, very well. And we thank you.

Ms. NELSON. Can I say one more thing? I think on top of volunteering and the importance of filling out financial-aid forms, I think PAL really needs to stress the importance of private scholarships because the Orphan Foundation of America truly has been a godsend to me. They are the only private scholarship organization that helps foster children, the only one. And I really think the word really needs to be spread because if they are the only one, then they should be contacted. All foster children should know about them.

So I think it is very important until other organizations can go along with them. I think there needs to be at the age of 18 it

doesn't just stop even though PAL can lead you up to that age, but the Orphan Foundation leads you right into college, and they are there for you, and they have been very, very important to me.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. That is a very important point to make. And we will take that to heart. It has also been interesting to me how you have developed by being involved in other organizations through the foster care system, and getting into student leadership positions. Not only do we not do enough to show you ways to volunteer in your community and thereby get exposure to career alternatives, but also we need to make sure that as young people you do get the chance to get involved in organizations through which you do have leadership opportunities.

And I have been very impressed with the work that the Orphan Foundation does to offer leadership opportunities and to help you develop. And to give you that week here in Washington, and all the other things they do.

And then, Mr. Rollins, all the wonderful experience you have had on the youth advisory board.

So I think those things are very important to make sure the program pushes those barriers for you.

Thank you very much for your testimony today.

Now we will bring forward our last panel. Robin Nixon, the director of Youth Services of the Child Welfare League of America; Sharyn Logan, the deputy director of the Bureau of Specialized Programs at the Department of Children and Families of Los Angeles; Don MacAllister, the founder and president of Orange County/California Works from Irvine, California, Bill Young, the commissioner of the Vermont Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, on behalf of the American Public Human Services Association; William Pinto, the adolescent services coordinator, Department of Children and Families, Hartford, Connecticut, and Kevin Garvey, community relations manager, UPS, United Parcel Service, Laurel, Maryland.

Oh yes, I am just going to remind you that your entire statement will be included in the record, and we would like to encourage you to keep your remarks to 5 minutes. The yellow light will tell you when you have 1 minute left, and the red light means that your time is up.

We do hope to have time for you to add anything that you really feel an urgency to say thereafter. But in order to have time to question, I would appreciate your observing the 5-minute rule.

So if we could start with Ms. Nixon.

**STATEMENT OF ROBIN NIXON, DIRECTOR, YOUTH SERVICES,
CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA**

Ms. NIXON. Good afternoon, Madam Chairwoman, Mr. Cardin, other Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for having me here this afternoon. I really appreciate the opportunity. Thank you for accepting my written statement, and please let it be entered in the record.

I would like to talk this afternoon, however, I guess, from my own experience. If I were to describe myself in my role here today, I would say that I am a youth worker, and I have been a youth worker for almost 20 years. I have worked in residential programs

out in the woods with teenaged boys. My husband and I, when we were first married, worked as live-in house parents to abused and neglected girls.

And most recently, I started and ran a transitional living program for homeless youth in northern Virginia.

Since I have come to the League, I have had the opportunity to talk to hundreds of youth-service providers all over the country every day about the challenges confronting young people as they leave foster care.

It is a critical issue, and we have a lot of information here today about the discouraging outcomes for many of the young people who leave foster care. On the very last page of my written testimony, there is a chart that describes some of the research that we have available.

I think I would like to follow on part of a theme that I have picked up here so far today that the young people that we are talking about are so courageous, I have so much respect for them and what they have accomplished. I know so many young people today that I worked with 9 years ago or 10 years ago that I am still in contact with and who can still consider me a person who is there for them and who supports them.

So that tells me that when you ask what the priority is for these young people, it is having connections that are there for them for their whole life. That can make the difference between making it or not.

When you talk about priorities for young people who are leaving care, we need to really put housing up front. A young person's ability to learn independent living skills, to learn employment skills, to complete their education really can't be met unless they have a roof over their heads and a place to call home during that time.

We need to help young people finish their education. As many people have pointed out here today, we would never expect our own sons and daughters to leave our homes and be completely self-sufficient at 18. Most young people still are in school at 18 and really need the time and opportunity with concrete support from the foster care system during that time.

We spent quite a bit of time today discussing independent living skills versus the foster care maintenance support that young people can receive. Independent living skills are available through the Independent Living Program, but there is no support for room and board, obviously, or for the types of programs, like the Pathways program or the apartment program that Mr. Rollins participates in.

Those can really make a tremendous difference to young people who are trying to make it.

The transitional program for homeless youth is an excellent model for what needs to be there for young people as they leave foster care. This very small program, there are only 78 of them nationwide, represent a safety net for those young people who do become homeless after they leave foster care.

If that program were opened up to young, completely opened up to young people to directly transition from care, it would have to be tremendously expanded because it cannot meet the current requests for services from young people who are homeless and not part of the foster care system.

The Independent Living Program itself is one of tremendous flexibility, that's both its greatest strength and its greatest weakness. States are able to apply those funds to provide services to young people 16 and all the way up to 21 in ways that they feel will best meet the needs of their young people. However, this may mean in some places that young people attend a conference once a year, and that is considered meeting their independent living requirement.

So there needs to be some more accountability for that program.

As far as extending IL services to children younger than 16 years, young people need to learn independent living their whole life. I know that my daughter started saying, "I can do it myself," at 4. And I started paying attention to that at 4.

For the young people who are in foster homes or in other residential settings, we need to integrate independent living as part of everything we do, just like we do counseling, like we do parental training, like all the other services that we provide.

However, the limited amount of money in the Independent Living Program should be emphasized for use with those older kids who are going to be on their own fairly soon. I really think that H.R. 671 is a great starting place for providing the support that these young people need and deserve, and I really look forward to working with you over the course of the next months to get something done.

And I would like to thank Nick Gwyn and Ron Haskins and Cassie Bevan for all their effort and just tremendous cooperation and ability to work with us folks out in the field.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement follows:]

Statement of Robin Nixon, Director, Youth Services, Child Welfare League of America

Good afternoon Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Robin Nixon and I am the Director of Youth Services at the Child Welfare League of America. CWLA is an association of more than one thousand public and private non-profit community based agencies that serve more than three million children, youth, and families each year all across the United States. Virtually all of CWLA's member agencies provide foster care and other services to teens who can not live safely at home with their families or who are homeless. Over 500 of our members provide specialized independent living and other transitional support to young people who will not be returning to a family and who will be on their own once they leave care. On behalf of our members, and on behalf of the more than 500,000 children and youth in foster care at this very moment, I thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing on the challenges confronting older children aging out of foster care.

I have worked with young people for nearly twenty years. I've worked as a counselor for abused and neglected youth ranging from 8 to 18 years old living in residential group care facilities. My husband and I spent several years as live-in houseparents to teenage girls in foster care. I have started and run a transitional living program for homeless youth. Since 1994, my work at CWLA has included supporting program directors in designing and implementing youth programs, training social workers, foster parents, and youth workers, and developing resources for the field of child welfare around youth issues.

I have a tremendous amount of respect for the many young people who have successfully endured the many hardships of abuse and neglect, abandonment, and being placed in lots of different foster homes. Children and youths who have been abused and neglected and removed from their homes are wards of the state. I believe that we have a responsibility to offer them the support they need to lead healthy, productive lives as adults. What I see today is that we are failing these

young people. We can and must do more to assist youths in foster care make a safe, successful transition to adulthood.

As a youth worker, I encountered young people who were experiencing tremendous challenges to self-sufficiency and to their very survival. I often asked myself how in the world we could expect these teens, who were barely old enough to drive, and many of whom were just finishing high school, to be emotionally and economically self-sufficient. Many of the young people with whom I worked left foster care at 18 and had been out on their own for a year or two: despite every effort to stay employed and make enough money to live on, they found themselves homeless and with no where to turn. As a youth program director, I was frustrated by the lack of support that communities offer these young people.

Adolescents constitute a major segment of the youngsters the child welfare system serves. Most youths enter out-of-home care because of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Others have run away from home or have no homes. Like our own sons and daughters, youths in out-of-home care need assistance to make the transition to independence. Vulnerable young people in foster care need special help and support. They have histories of significant abuse, neglect, and multiple placements that greatly compromise their prospects for successful independence. These teenagers often find themselves truly on their own, with few, if any, financial resources; limited education, training and employment options; no place to live; and little or no support from family, friends, and community. The resulting cost to the youths themselves, their communities, and society at large is unacceptably and increasingly high.

Talking with people all over the country every day, I see that I am only one of many people asking this question: why wouldn't we, as communities acting in the capacity of parents to these children, ensure that adequate resources were invested in their transition to adult life? We have all seen the many news articles, media reports, and research studies that make the situation painfully clear. We must do more to support our nation's foster children during these challenging years. Most importantly, what young people themselves have to say about the transition to adulthood should guide our actions and motivate all of us to work together for positive change.

WHO ARE ADOLESCENTS AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE?

- At the end of 1996, there were 530,912 children living in out of home care, family foster care, kinship care, or residential care.¹
- Currently, teens represent approximately 30 percent of the foster care population.²
- Each year, over 20,000 of these older youths "age out" of foster care and must make the transition to self-sufficiency.³

PROBLEMS FACED BY ADOLESCENTS AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

Safety

Young people who age out of the child welfare system are not safe. They experience great risk in terms of their emotional, economic, and physical safety. They are more likely to become homeless, to experience early parenthood, and to be victims of violence than their mainstream peers. Less than half will have graduated from high school before leaving foster care, and few will have the opportunity to attend college. This constellation of challenges to safety and economic opportunity creates a formidable barrier to young people forced to make it on their own.

Young people themselves report that the transition to independence and the expectation of self-sufficiency is often very rapid, sometimes unplanned for and unexpected, and results in their feeling "dumped" by the system that cared for them.

Permanence

Loss of family connections and multiple foster care placements hinder the ability of foster youth to achieve permanence. Many people believe that adolescents are not adoptable and that children over twelve years old are seldom adopted. The reality is that thousands of teens are adopted. Adoption, however, is not an option for many young people. We must acknowledge the reality of independence for over 20,000 emancipating teens each year who carry the burden of family rejection and multiple

¹ Child Welfare League of America. (1998). State agency survey. Washington, DC: Author.

² Child Welfare League of America. (1998). State agency survey. Washington, DC: Author.

³ Cook, R. (1992). A national evaluation of Title IV-E foster care independent living programs for youth, phase 2 final report. Rockville, MD: Westat, Inc.

placements with them into adulthood, and may experience difficulty in attachment to others and to the community as a result. No matter what the permanency goal is for a teenager, each foster youth will eventually take on the responsibilities of independent adulthood; all of them need extra support and assistance in order to succeed.

Young people report that they need relationships with people who care about them and who are there for them consistently. They say that support and services offered during the critical transitional years make all the difference in the world to helping them make it on their own.

Well-Being

Young people must develop positive personal and social functioning, and must have access to health services, education, and employment to achieve successful adulthood. The experiences that result in children being placed in foster care, as well as the experience of foster care itself, can create barriers to achieving well-being in any or all of these areas.

Young people who have left the foster care system say that disruptions in education caused by early emancipation, insufficient preparation for the workplace, lack of access to health care, and the immediate struggle for day to day survival after leaving care make planning and even hoping for a good future very, very difficult.

When I talk to you about the challenges facing these young people, I am not just talking about faceless statistics: I am talking about young people whom I know and care about, like my friend Rose. Rose was in foster care for most of her life, and was living in a group home when she turned 18 and had to leave the program. She is an articulate, caring, intelligent young woman, and I met her because she was volunteering at the youth agency where she had last been cared for so that she could help other foster youth. At the same time, she was struggling desperately to balance a job, a place to live, and going to college. I remember talking to her last winter and finding out that she had been sleeping every night on the bathroom floor because that was the only place the heat worked in the apartment she was living in. I remember her asking me if she should drop out of college and just work because she was so tired and having trouble keeping up with class work. It's young people like Rose that deserve more of our support and effort to ensure that they have a chance to attain positive life goals.

Attachment One: Summary of Outcomes for Youth Formerly Served By the Foster Care System Child Welfare League of America 1999

Study	Homelessness	Education	Employment	Incarceration	Early Parenthood	Cost-to-Community
Barth (1990) This study documents the experiences of youth who emancipated from foster care..	30% reported having no housing or having to move every week..	At follow-up, 45% of 21 year olds had completed high school.	75% were working, with an average income of \$10,000..	31% of youth had been arrested while 26% had served jail time..	40% reported a pregnancy since discharge, most were unplanned..	Almost 40% received AFDC or general assistance funds.
Cook (1991) The study examined the impact of independent living services on enhancing the ability of foster youth to be self-sufficient, 2.5 to 4 years post-discharge..	25% reported at least one night of homelessness..	54% had completed high school..	38% maintained employment for one year..	No data reported.	60% of the women had given birth..	40% were a cost to the community.
Alexander & Huberty (1993) The study was conducted with a sample of former foster youth from The Villages in Indiana, with an average age of 22 years.	The average number of moves during the last five years was 7.4..	27% had some college or vocational training..	49% were employed, compared with 67% of 18-24 year olds in the general population..	Almost 42% had been arrested.	No data reported.	14% received assistance in the form of food stamps, general assistance, and/or AFDC.
Courtney & Piliavin (1998) The study looked at foster youth transitions to adulthood, 12 to 18 months post-discharge..	12% reported living on the street or in a shelter since discharge..	At 12 to 18 months post-discharge, 55% had completed high school..	50% were employed, & the average weekly wage ranged from \$31 to \$450..	18% experienced post-discharge incarceration.	No data reported.	32% received public assistance.

PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES THAT HELP

There are existing policies, programs and services at the federal, state and community levels that make a difference for emancipating foster youth and for youth who have left the foster care system. We must be able to extend these critical services and replicate successful program strategies in order to ensure that all youth leaving foster care have the opportunity to succeed. Expanding the time over which services can be delivered to age 21 would make it possible for more youth to be served by these and similar programs.

Some states have implemented policies for serving youth over 18 that include guiding criteria for a discharge plan and services to be delivered during the transitional period. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the states of Michigan, Maryland and New York have all established policies to ensure that many youth needing services beyond age 18 will receive them, and that emancipation occurs with support. More states must be encouraged and supported in establishing similar model policies that help youth emancipate safely. California, for example, which serves over 100,000 foster children each year, is only able to offer support through age 18.

Improved policies and extended services have resulted in more successful outcomes for children who emancipate from the foster care system.

- One of the few available research studies to capture post-emancipation experiences of foster children was conducted by the Westat corporation in 1989–1990. This study showed that youth who received support in order to attend post-secondary educational and vocational programs were more likely to obtain living-wage employment. Youth who received extended assistance were also less likely to become pregnant as teenagers, less likely to become involved in the criminal justice system, and less likely to become homeless or to join the welfare rolls after leaving care.⁴

- In New York, the Children's Village's Work Appreciation for Youth (WAY) Scholarship program offers work experience, individual counseling, work ethics training, tutoring, financial incentives for saving, and a five-year commitment to teenagers in foster care. Over the past 15 years, this program has provided comprehensive support to the highest risk foster youth in residential treatment. Longitudinal evaluation of the one-to-one support and intensive aftercare provided by WAY has shown that more than 75% of participants graduate from high school or complete a GED, and over half go on to post-secondary education. It is important to note that foster youth enrolled in this program usually need more than four years to complete secondary education. WAY Scholars have very low rates of arrest in early adulthood (8%), and none of the 300 youth who have been through the program is on welfare.⁵

For less than ten dollars per day per youth, WAY makes a substantial difference in young people's ability to complete high school, obtain living-wage employment, and achieve a safe, successful transition to adulthood.

- The Workforce Strategy Center in New York has been working with communities all over the U.S. to strengthen support for disadvantaged youth to complete high school and attend post-secondary educational programs. Their research has shown that even one to two years of community college can make the difference between economic self-sufficiency and poverty.⁶

- Dr. Edmund Mech, a researcher specializing in studies of older children in foster care, was able to demonstrate that young people who participate in supervised apartment-based independent living programs are more successful in learning independent living skills.⁷ We need more apartment programs, like the one operated by Lighthouse Youth Services in Cincinnati, that give foster youth a chance to learn and practice skills in real-life settings. The Bridges program in Los Angeles also offers apartment living, counseling, and life skills training to young people both before they leave foster care and for some time after. To complete the web of support, we need programs like Living Independently for Tomorrow (LIFT), run by Residential Youth Services in Alexandria Virginia, that offer transitional living services to youth who find themselves homeless after leaving foster care.

- Programs like the California Youth Connection, the Independent Living Youth Advisory Board in Maryland, and the Foster Care Youth Partnership in New York City provide crucial opportunities for youth to participate in developing independent living programs and to have their voice heard about the issues that concern them.

⁴ Cook, R. (1992).

⁵ Children's Village, Evaluation of WAY Program.

⁶ Gruber, D. (1999). Education Pays. The Workforce Strategy Center: New York, NY.

⁷ Mech, E., et al. (1994) Life skills knowledge: A survey of foster adolescents in three placement settings. Special issue: Preparing foster youth for adulthood. Children and Youth Services Review, 16 (3–4), 181–200.

Opportunities for youth to be involved in these activities not only give them a chance to learn important leadership skills, but also contribute toward a stronger system of foster care and independent living services in the state.

- Young people report that family or family-like ties are critical, even if they are unable to live with family members. Services that help establish lifetime connections, or that support re-establishing or strengthening family ties are an important part of a comprehensive approach to supporting emancipating youth. Examples of promising programs in this area include a demonstration project funded by the Department of Health and Human Services that was implemented by Four Oaks of Iowa in Cedar Rapids. This program helped young people who were unlikely to return home establish strong youth-adult relationships with either extended family members or another involved adult. Another promising practice has been modeled by the Casey Family Program and Casey Family Services, both of which provide family foster care and commit to serving and maintaining relationships with foster youth up to at least age 25.

- Young people say that an adult mentor who is there for them when times get tough, and who is a consistent source of support, make one of the most important contributions to their ability to achieve successful adulthood. My friend Alfred in California can attest to the truth of this. For several years, Alfred spent each Christmas walking back and forth across the Golden Gate Bridge—he did not have family to spend the holiday with. Since that lonely and difficult time, Alfred has become very close to the director of his independent living program, on whom he can depend for advice, support, and a seat at the table for Christmas dinner.

Increasing interest and emerging proposals present a significant opportunity for us to work together and effect changes that will make a positive difference in the lives of our foster youth—and that will help to create a future where they have the chance to make a difference in the lives of others.

CWLA POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The federal government plays an important role in ensuring that young people exiting foster care make a successful transition to adulthood. Congress passed the bipartisan Adoption and Safe Families Act in 1997 to ensure that more children in foster care would have safe and permanent homes. While most children and youths in foster care can eventually return to their biological families, many can not. ASFA makes it easier for many children to move more quickly into permanent adoptive homes or other permanent living arrangements. Adoption, however, is not always possible for many older children in foster care. Congress should now address our obligation to these youths. We should do all that we can to help these youths achieve self-sufficiency.

The “Transition to Adulthood Program Act of 1999,” H.R. 671, recently introduced by Rep. Ben Cardin (D-MD), addresses many of the issues. We support this bill and urge Congress to pass this bill this year. This legislation offers access to critical foster care maintenance and other supports to youths up to age 21; makes assistance available to promote education, training or employment; promotes interagency collaboration to advance self-sufficiency of youths aging out of foster care; updates funding resources, asset limits and the distribution formula for the Title IV–E Independent Living Services program and provides tax credits to employers who hire former foster children.

President Clinton’s budget also address the needs of these youths. The budget proposes \$280 million in new funding over five years to support an initiative to help the more than 20,000 children who reach age 18 and leave foster care each year. The Administration’s initiative would increase funding for the Title IV–E Independent Living program, establish a new competitive grant program for states to help youths with their living expenses, increase support for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Transitional Living Program and give states the option of providing Medicaid coverage to children leaving foster care up to age 21. We support the Administration’s initiative and think it takes a major step in the right direction.

We are grateful that both the Administration and Congress have begun to address the needs of these youths. Our recommendations outlined below support additional resources and other improvements to better address the needs of these young people.

The Child Welfare League of America recommends that all states extend Title IV–E assistance to youths up to age 21.

Current policy for Title IV–E Foster Care Maintenance and Administration allows reimbursement to the states for eligible youth up to age 19. Medicaid coverage for children receiving foster care assistance generally ends at age 18. Many foster youth are forced to leave care at age 18, while they are still in high school, because they

will not graduate by their 19th birthday. Many others find themselves unable to sustain stable housing and employment because they do not have any adult support during these critical years.

In order to ensure that young people have a fair chance to achieve productive citizenship, we must invest in their care during the transitional years. An extension of Title IV–E assistance would result both in reduced human cost for youth who are abandoned by their only source of support and in reduced financial burden to the homeless, welfare, mental health, and health systems. This extension would also ensure that these youth would maintain their Medicaid eligibility.

- H.R. 671, the Transition to Adulthood Program Act, gives states the option of extending Title IV–E assistance to former foster youth up to the age of 21 as long as they are working or enrolled in educational activities and have a plan to become completely self-sufficient. Funds could be used for programs designed to promote the education, training or employment of the child. At a state's option, these youths would maintain their eligibility for Medicaid.

- The Administration's FY 2000 budget proposes a new capped mandatory program of competitive grants for states to support living expenses of youth who otherwise lose Title IV–E assistance at age 18. The proposal includes \$5 million for FY 2000 increasing to \$20 million by 2003. The Administration's budget also provides \$50 million to give states the option to extend Medicaid coverage for these youths up to age 21.

CWLA recommends that funding for the Title IV–E Independent Living program be increased to match current foster care populations and to ensure that states have adequate resources to provide the skills training that young people must have to succeed.

In addition to meeting children's basic needs for food, shelter, and care, we must ensure that young people receive training and support for acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for independence. Funding to meet this need has been available under the Title IV–E Independent Living program since 1987. This program provides specific support for independent living skill development, job training, and preparation for employment. This program has been shown to increase the ability of foster youth to manage their money, access community resources, and find a job.

Funding for the Independent Living program, capped at \$70 million, has not kept pace with the population of youth eligible to receive the services. Current allocations to the states remain based on their 1984 population, and overall funds have not been increased since 1992. Increasing the funding for this program will allow services to be offered to more of the youth who are supposed to receive them. We support at least a 50% increase in funding to the states for independent living services. Consensus exists to update the allocation formula for distribution of funds to states that takes foster care population changes into consideration. The current formula relies on figures from 1984 and does not meet the needs of many states which now serve many more youth. No state should lose funds through the reallocation process.

In addition, funding should support the completion of longitudinal research to determine self-sufficiency outcomes of youth leaving care.

- The Administration's FY 2000 budget proposal increases funding from \$70 million to \$105 million for the Title IV–E Independent Living program.

- H.R. 671, the Transition to Adulthood Program Act, updates funding resources, asset limits and the distribution formula for the Title IV–E Independent Living Services program.

CWLA recommends that funding for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Transitional Living program be increased so that those foster youth who do become homeless are able to get help when they need it the most.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Transitional Living Program provides critical safety net support services for homeless youth, including many foster care youths. Current funding allows 78 programs nationwide to provide a variety of services to homeless youth age 16 to 21, including residential care for up to 18 months; information and counseling in basic life skills; interpersonal skill building; educational advancement; job attainment skills; and physical and mental health care.

The Administration's FY 2000 budget proposal to provide \$20 million for FY 2000 for this program, an increase of \$5 million.

CWLA recommends that safe, stable, affordable housing be made available to each youth emancipating from care.

No young person should be emancipated from foster care to homelessness. Forty percent of the nation's homeless are former foster youth. Young people who leave foster care and go to college should have access to housing during holidays and over summer breaks. Other youth who are still pursuing their high school education or who are entering the world of work should also have access to stable living arrange-

ments during the transitional period. We recommend that the Department of Housing and Urban Development work in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services to strengthen housing programs and services to help this vulnerable population of foster children. The investment of funds to support these youth through life skills programs, independent living programs and transitional apartment programs would more than pay for itself in reduced future dependence on government assistance.

- H.R. 671, the Transition to Adulthood Program Act, promotes interagency collaboration to ensure that the housing needs of these youths are addressed.

We strongly urge the Committee to take decisive action to help these young people right now. The challenges facing children and youths who emancipate from the foster care system are challenges that we have an opportunity and an obligation to help them overcome. It is in their best interests, and it is in the best interests of each one of us for young people to make healthy, safe, contributing transitions to adulthood. Thank you for all of your hard work so far, and we look forward to working with you as you consider this important legislation.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much.
Ms. Logan.

**STATEMENT OF SHARYN L. LOGAN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES, LOS
ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

Ms. LOGAN. Good afternoon, Chairwoman Johnson and Subcommittee Members. Thank you for the opportunity to address you.

I am not going to repeat what is in my statement, but I would like to focus on three programs that we have in Los Angeles County for emancipated and foster youth.

The first program. In Los Angeles County, every year, approximately 1,000 youth emancipate from foster care. The first program I would like to talk about is our scholarship program.

On the previous panel, one young lady was discussing scholarships in Texas. In Los Angeles County we guarantee that every child who emancipates from foster care who wants to attend college is guaranteed a scholarship. That was quite a promise and quite a commitment, and the way we meet that commitment is to raise private funds. We raise private money from United Friends of the Children; KLOS, which is a radio station, an ABC affiliate, which has helped us raise almost a quarter of a million dollars in scholarships for our young people, Wells Fargo Bank, the Teague Family Foundation and many others. We use our money and the ILP money as seed money to draw down other scholarship funds.

And we have staff who spend a lot of time researching the available scholarships and college programs so that any young person in Los Angeles County who emancipates and want to go on to college is able to do so.

The second program that I want to talk about is housing. As Commissioner Williams mentioned, you cannot use ILP money for board and care, and it was also just mentioned you cannot have a program for emancipated foster youths without housing.

What we have done in this regard is to develop housing, including the first apartment building built just for the use of emancipating foster youth. Our partner in this has been the county Community Development Commission which acquires and rehabilitates property for us. The way we were able to do that is with two other

sources of funding, which are very important. One is private dollars and the other is HUD money. We would not be able to do this without HUD. In 1992, we applied for and were granted a HUD grant for the needs of emancipating foster youth. And since that time, we have received 11 additional HUD grants.

We also have raised, with United Friends of the Children, a tremendous amount of private money. The Weingart Foundation has donated almost \$11 million just to deal with the needs of emancipating foster youth because we cannot use ILP money for that, and the kids must have somewhere to live.

We actually own six apartment buildings within Los Angeles County, and we also rent scattered-site apartments. We consider that to be hands-on, independent living skills because once they get into their apartments, they have to actually put into practice what they have learned in those classes. And it is not easy, as the mother of a teenager, to teach teenagers how to plan a menu, how to prepare the meal, how to budget, how to do the laundry so your clothes don't all come out pink.

But those are the practical lessons that we teach kids, and how to keep that apartment clean, which again, as the mother of a teenager, is not always that easy.

We have children scattered throughout Los Angeles County. We have 200 beds for emancipated youth. They all have a roommate; they all must have a job; they can go to school if they like, but they must have a job; they also pay us 10 percent of their income, whatever that is, for rent.

And the reason for that is that we are trying to get them used to the idea of paying rent, and paying their obligations. At the end of their time in the program, which is up to 18 months, we give them that money back as a savings account. They are also required to have a savings account into which they must deposit funds while living in our housing.

We are very proud of that, and we have over 200 beds, as I said, in Los Angeles County, including an apartment building built especially for these youth.

The third program that we have in Los Angeles County is an alumni resource center. As you heard the young people say before, it is very lonely when you leave foster care, even if you are in college, even if you are going to a vocational school. You still need a place to come that is yours, where people are still going to help you. And with money from the Weingart Foundation, we have an alumni resource center with an 800-number. So no matter what happens, no matter how far they go or what happens, they can always call us toll-free and we will try to find them housing. We will help them with scholarships. We will help them with low-cost or free legal or medical care. Whatever they may need.

So it is very important that we use private dollars and HUD dollars. I want to emphasize HUD has to be a partner on this. And they have been very useful to us.

There were a couple of questions that were asked before about lowering the age for independent living services. We have a program, which is in my testimony, called Early Start to Emancipation which is for youngsters age 14 and 15. We do that with

State money because they are not eligible for ILP funds. And what we have found is that you have to start before 14 and 15.

What that program focuses on is children who are 2 or 3 years behind in their reading and math skills because if they can't read and they can't do math, they can't finish high school and they are not going to be successful.

So we use that program to get them ready to go into the Independent Living Program.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement follows:]

Statement of Sharyn L. Logan, Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services, Los Angeles, California

BACKGROUND

The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services is responsible for over 65,000 children. Every year between 750 – 1000 of these youth leave foster care because they have completed high school or turned age 19.

The existing Title IV–E foster care program provides foster care payments to children who, for their own safety and protection, must reside in out-of-home care. While efforts are made to reunify them with their families or provide them with permanent alternatives to foster care, for some children, there are no options. Many youth must emancipate from foster care when they are no longer eligible for these Title IV–E funds.

Title IV–E eligibility criteria is based upon two factors: age and attendance in high school. The specific eligibility requirements allow youth to receive aid after their 18th birthday so long as the youth continue to reside in foster care placement, and continue to attend high school or the equivalent level of vocational or technical training and the youth may reasonably be expected to complete the educational or training program before his or her 19th birthday.

These youth come from homes which have been so neglectful or so abusive that they were unsafe for the children. Unfortunately, they are not model families. Some of these families are unstable, the parents unable to parent. The children, as a result, fall behind in their school programs. In still other situations, the youth have been moved from one placement setting to another, perhaps several times, another factor which contributes to their falling behind. Schools cannot accommodate these changes, transcripts get lost, children are not appropriately placed in classes at grade level until the records arrive, school district schedules may differ.

The net result is that some youth do not graduate from high school before they turn 19. These youth are not allowed to remain in foster care even though we know that a high school diploma increases lifetime earning power seven fold and that it significantly decreases the youths chances of welfare dependency, homelessness and other negative outcomes.

And oddly enough, in California, youth who are educationally handicapped may remain in high school until they are 21. But if you are a foster child and educationally handicapped, you would not be allowed to remain in foster care after you turn 18.

We believe that the long term benefits of extending eligibility for foster care until these youth complete high school or an equivalent level of training, or turn 21, whichever comes first, has an incalculable payoff for the youth and for society. These are not the majority of our foster youth, they are only a small proportion. The investment would have a return that even Wall Street would envy.

PROBLEM

1. Characteristically, youth in out-of-home care have histories of abuse, neglect and exploitation that compromise their abilities to live independently.

2. For adolescents who are not psychologically ready for discharge from foster care, emancipation can be a time of fear and pain.

3. This population has been found to be at high risk for poor outcomes as young adults.

4. Adolescents in out-of-home care represent approximately 35–40% of placement caseloads and often need assistance in making the transition from a dependency status to self-directed community living.

5. These youth tend to remain in foster care for longer periods of time and increasing numbers plan to live independently, rather than return to families.

6. Many of these children do not have the emotional or financial support of family that children not leaving foster care experience.

7. Research has found that they experience deficiencies in areas of job preparation, money management, and finding a place to live.

8. Often they lack financial, emotional and social support networks as well as consistent family ties.

9. Studies have consistently found that many foster youth have emotional, behavioral, psychological and physical impairments that present obstacles to independent living and many need remedial training.

10. The 1990 Westat Inc. evaluation of Independent Living Programs found youth exiting from foster care had a number of significant problems and needs that interfered with their ability to lead productive adult lives, including: lack of educational achievement; limited job skills and experience; physical and mental health issues; and housing needs.

11. Homelessness and joblessness appear to be a frequent result of aging out of foster care, with as many as 30–40% of the homeless population having histories of foster care.

12. Numerous studies and reports indicate that adolescents in foster care transition less well than adolescents not in foster care.

13. Studies consistently demonstrate that failure to equip youth with the necessary skills for self-sufficiency increases risk for poor outcomes, including homelessness, joblessness, welfare dependency and incarceration.

In summary, youth preparing for emancipation from foster care represent a high risk population with particular needs and deficits that make entry into adult society a serious challenge. However, we are capable of addressing many of these needs and deficits through focused transitional services related to education, employment and housing.

Los Angeles County Emancipation Program

In Los Angeles County we believe that no youth should leave foster care without preparation for independence. We further believe that once youth age out of foster care our responsibility for their transition to independence has not ended.

To make our beliefs a reality we have developed several programs. The development of these programs required us to develop new partnerships, strengthen existing partnerships, utilize our experience as parents, and most important—listen to our youth about their needs.

The components of Los Angeles County's Emancipation Program are as follows:

EARLY START TO EMANCIPATION PREPARATION (E-STEP)

The goal of the Early Start to Emancipation Program (E-STEP) is to motivate foster youth ages 14–15 to begin preparing for eventual discharge from the foster care system and to identify academic and life skills that need enhancement. Emancipation Preparation Advisors meet with youth and care providers to assess youth readiness for emancipation.

Areas of assessment include basic skills and school performance, career goals, daily living skills, survival skills, and interpersonal skills and social development. Special events, such as "Independence City," allow youth to practice these skills. In Independence City youth are given play money and must purchase everything they need to live, from housing to car insurance, in a lawful and orderly way.

Important components of the E-STEP program are tutoring for youth who are three (3) years or more behind in math and reading levels and exposure to college campuses and various careers.

This program is funded with State monies.

JOBS SECTION

In January 1994, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) established a JOBS section. The primary focus of the JOBS section is job recruitment for emancipating foster youth. The staff in this section conducts Job Fairs throughout Los Angeles County and works with various County departments and private sector businesses to identify jobs for foster youth. Additionally, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established a County policy whereby 5% of all unfilled entry level positions are filled by youth emancipating from foster care. This program also enrolls over 1500 youth annually in federally funded youth employment programs such as Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and L.A. Youth at Work.

This program required the Department to establish partnerships with the primary Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) agencies in Los Angeles County. Both the County of Los Angeles and the City of Los Angeles have allocated specific slots for summer youth employment jobs for foster youth.

The goal is that every foster youth who emancipates from Los Angeles County has had two (2) work experiences. This provides the youth with a work experience, teaches them the value of work, how to manage money, how to deal with adults in a work environment, and how to integrate work into their life routines.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PLACEMENT PROGRAM

This housing program is an innovative transitional placement alternative for youth under the supervision of the Department of Children and Family Services. This program is designed to further the goals of the Independent Living Program. It serves as a bridge to ensure foster youth are properly trained, learn how to achieve affordable housing arrangements to integrate into the community when emancipated from foster care. It targets 17–18 year olds in their senior year of high school. Youth selected for this program have demonstrated significant maturity in handling responsibilities in school and current placements.

Participants in this program learn how to live with a roommate, cook, clean, shop for clothes and groceries, utilize community resource and learn skills that promote self-sufficiency.

Youths in this program live in apartments in the community which are supervised by community-based agencies under contract with the Department.

This program is funded by a combination of State and County funds.

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

The Independent Living Program (ILP) is a federally funded program designed to assist and prepare youths with a history of out-of-home care, age 16 and older, in making the transition from dependency to adult self-sufficiency. ILP has become a linchpin in emancipation planning by linking DCFS teenagers in out-of-home care with resources that prepare them for responsible and productive adult lives.

Independent living skill classes are integral part of this program. Each youth attends classes that focus on life-skills, self-esteem, handling past losses, and developing effective social skills. The 27 hour classroom curriculum is conducted on local community college campuses. These classes are conducted in a manner that is sensitive to the skill and developmental levels of the participants. ILP Coordinators refer youth to the departmental and extra-departmental programs that can provide special assistance, such as the JOBS Program, Transitional Housing Program, Job Corps, and the California Conservation Corps.

Fees for college applications, pre-admission tests and special preparatory classes can be paid or reimbursed by ILP. As youth emancipate from foster care, ILP provides ongoing college and vocational school financial assistance for youth enrolling in post secondary training. ILP also supports foster youth and ex-foster youth organizations such as California Youth Connection in providing peer support, information, group activities, advocacy and referrals.

THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The DCFS Scholarship Program provides financial support to youth who complete high school requirements and wish to attend college and vocational schools. Consistent with the DCFS commitment to provide financial assistance to every youth who wants to attend college, this program is open to every youth who emancipates. Last year, we assisted over 500 youth with scholarship funding. This is the result of contributions and fund-raising efforts of many child advocates, including United Friends of the Children, Teague Family Foundation, Youth Opportunities United, KLOS-ABC (a local radio station), Wells Fargo Bank, Southern California Edison, and many others.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM

In 1989, a report by UCLA's School of Social Welfare Center For Child and Family Policy Studies indicated that of the 1,000 foster youth emancipated from the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) annually, 450 were at risk of becoming homeless. Under State regulations, foster youth are no longer eligible for services after the age of 18 (age 19 if they are still in high school). With no family members to care for them and no resources, these youth usually ended up on the street.

Foster youth enter the child welfare system as a result of being victims of abuse. The overwhelming response of child welfare agencies is to remove children from biological families. Often, these children are not returned to their families and are in essence reared by the government. Unlike real families, the government terminates this relationship when the youth turns 18 or 19. Without additional assistance upon termination from foster care, many of these youth join the ranks of the homeless.

In response to this problem, in 1992, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), applied for and received the first Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant awarded nationally for homeless foster youth. With the receipt of this grant, the Department also developed a unique partnership with the Community Development Commission (CDC), the local housing and redevelopment agency. DCFS has been awarded 11 HUD grants and renewals of the first two (2) HUD grants. CDC has purchased several apartment buildings for the exclusive use of emancipated foster youth.

United Friends of the Children (UFC) Bridges, a volunteer non-profit organization, is an equal partner in the effort to solve the problem of homelessness among foster youth. In 1996, this collaboration between DCFS and UFC was enhanced by the addition of the Weingart Foundation. The Weingart Foundation awarded \$10.7 million dollars to UFC Bridges to fund services to assist in solving the problem of homelessness among emancipated foster youth.

The program provides housing and supportive services to emancipated foster youth who would otherwise be homeless or living in marginal housing situations. Residents live in apartments rented by the program or in buildings purchased and rehabilitated by CDC. Apartments are leased in safe areas with access to public transportation, shopping and grocery stores. The average age of the residents is 19.5 years.

All residents are required to work, attend school or vocational training. No resident receives public assistance. Each resident pays 10% of their income as rent which is placed in a savings account and returned to the resident when they leave the program. Youth may stay in the program up to 18 months. At the end of their stay, youth are assisted with finding affordable, permanent housing.

Each youth is assigned a social worker who assists with job search, school enrollment, and use of community resources. The worker also helps the youth develop in the areas of food purchases, food preparation, laundry, house cleaning, job readiness skills, and finding affordable medical and dental care.

This program utilizes the different but complementary skills of two public agencies, a volunteer non-profit organization and a private foundation to solve a visible and preventable social problem. This problem is the number of younger homeless on the street previously in foster care.

Two public agencies without a tradition of working together, child welfare and housing, have come together to solve this problem. Both the non-profit sector and a private foundation are equal partners with the public agencies. Without the fund-raising ability of the non-profit partner and the foundation, this program would not be possible.

The current and potential beneficiaries of this program are youth who emancipate from foster care but have no viable housing options. The program provides services to homeless young men, women and teen parents who are between the ages of 18 and 21, who have recently aged out of the foster care system, who are or would otherwise become homeless.

Youth in this program benefit from stable housing and supportive staff that provide age-appropriate support in several areas which include: educational and vocational attainment; employment opportunities; medical and dental care; individual and group counseling; and planning for permanent housing.

The youth participants and Los Angeles County residents directly and indirectly benefit from this program. The direct benefit to youth is safe and stable housing with various supports for learning how to function self-sufficiently, independent of public assistance. Indirectly, youth develop competence in managing their own affairs and contributing to their communities.

In a direct sense, the benefit to communities results from fewer homeless youths on the streets. Ongoing research by Children's Hospital of Los Angeles has found that 61% of the over 300 homeless youth interviewed in Los Angeles County reported having lived in foster care. Characteristically, many of these youth resort to crime, drugs, and reliance on public assistance for their survival. In an indirect sense, the examples provided by communities of working adults often serve as positive models for youth to emulate in constructing positive lifestyles. Both the youth and adult models benefit from the interaction.

Since 1992, DCFS and United Friends of the Children-Bridges have raised over \$20 million in federal and private funds, exclusively for the needs of emancipated foster youth.

Since 1992, the County Community Development Commission has spent over \$10 million to acquire and rehabilitate property for the exclusive use of emancipated foster youth.

THE ALUMNI RESOURCE CENTER

The Alumni Resource Center (ARC) provides services to youth age 18–21 who have emancipated from foster care. ARC offers both ILP follow-up support and a drop-in center for computer access and specialized training classes. The goal of ARC services is to equip youth emancipating from out-of-home care with the skills and resources needed for self-sufficient adult living. The Alumni Resource Center provides ILP follow-up support services to youth who enroll in educational or vocational training.

Services related to ILP follow-up are rendered on a need basis and may be offered up to age 21. These services include: staff outreach, college and vocational tuition assistance, financial assistance for school-related fees and supplies, clothing stipends, transportation fare assistance, and scholarships.

The ARC is primarily funded by United Friends of the Children-Bridges through a grant from the Weingart Foundation. An important component is a five year longitudinal study conducted by the Research Center at the University of Southern California School of Social Work. This study will evaluate the program's effectiveness in preventing emancipated youth from becoming homeless, relying on public assistance, developing substance abuse addictions and related criminal behaviors, and practicing unhealthy and inappropriate sexual behavior. It will also seek to correlate several critical personal characteristics and skills of the participants with outcomes related to self-sufficiency.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue Title IV–E funding until youth complete high school or equivalency on approved vocational program; or turn 21 whichever comes first.
2. Continue Medicaid funding until age 21.
3. Encourage a partnership between the federal departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop joint Notices of Funding Activity for service-enriched housing for emancipated foster youth.
4. Encourage the States with incentives to develop programs for pre and post emancipating foster youth.
5. Increase the federal funding of the Independent Living Program (ILP) to allow for more services to youth. Make ILP services mandatory for youth.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. That's excellent. I am going to take Mr. MacAllister because he is supposed to be out there ready to go to the airport at 3:30, but since we are a full-service Subcommittee staff, we are also going to call the airline and see if his plane is going to fly. [Laughter.]

Ms. LOGAN. Could you see if United is leaving for Los Angeles? [Laughter.]

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Write it down, and we will check that because I think the chances are that they are not going out. So write down your flight number and we will do that.

Mr. MacAllister.

STATEMENT OF DONALD I. MACALLISTER, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT, ORANGE COUNTY/CALIFORNIA WORKS, IRVINE, CALIFORNIA

Mr. MACALLISTER. Good afternoon. Thank you, Madam Chairman and Mr. Cardin for allowing me the opportunity—

Mr. CARDIN. You want to use that microphone?

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Yes, sorry.

Mr. MACALLISTER. Good afternoon, Madam Chairman and Mr. Cardin. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity this afternoon to present my view concerning independent living skills legislation. My name is Don MacAllister, and I was a foster care youth. I am now the founder and president of Orange County/California Works, which is a nonprofit youth employment network based in Orange County, California.

I would like share briefly with you my experiences. My life was a struggle because of the death of my mother and other problems within our family. I was placed in foster care for about 6 years. After emancipation, I spent the next 2 years living life as a homeless person, and during that time I realized that the only chance for me to get out of that predicament was to find and keep a job.

Because of these experiences, I have chosen to assist kids in similar situations so that they can successfully make the transition from foster care to productive living, to living a productive life. Again, as we have heard today, the statistics show that more than 50 percent of the kids that leave foster care become homeless, end up in prison, or apply for welfare. And 60 percent of the girls are becoming unwed teen mothers.

This is sad.

All these kids at this critical stage in their life, having to face this potentially dismal future. We as a society must do a better job. We must help foster teenagers become self-sufficient.

Clearly in life, there is a large set of skills necessary to succeed. My purpose here today is to speak about those skills which are in need of special emphasis.

Based on my personal experiences and my current work, I believe it is imperative that employment-related skills be taught to all foster care teenagers. Those skills should include how to prepare for and conduct oneself during an interview, how to perform on the job, also, essential skills, such as computer and Internet literacy.

We must help foster care teenagers have a chance to succeed in today's everchanging world.

I propose that the independent living skills legislation be amended so that employment-related skills are taught to all foster care teenagers during the 2 years prior to emancipation. This will not only help these teenagers at this critical time in their life to be able to obtain a job, but it is also going to help them so that they avoid crime or becoming dependent on welfare.

I'm also proposing that for-profit and nonprofit organizations receive independent living skills funds and thereby compete on equal footing so that they both may fully help foster care teenagers to make that transition.

These additional changes will provide foster care teenagers and their caregivers with more choices for effective training, which can only be beneficial.

My third proposal is that all independent living-skills providers be required to achieve certain performance standards to receive funds. This will provide incentives so that independent living-skills providers will operate more effectively and cost-efficiently.

In my written testimony, the evidence is provided to demonstrate how effective and cost-efficient an alternative approach can be as embodied by the organization that I run, Orange County/California Works Youth Employment Network.

By implementing these proposed amendments, not only will foster kids be assisted to make this—to be better prepared to make the transition, but significant and far-reaching impact will also result in the following areas: a reduction in welfare and other socially related costs, and a reduction in crime and costs associated with the criminal-justice system.

Subcommittee Members, the benefits of these changes cannot be overstated and will help make our society a healthier and a better place to live in.

Thank you, Madam Chairman and Mr. Cardin for allowing me this privilege of speaking before this honorable body today.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement and attachments follow:]

Statement of Donald I. MacAllister, Founder and President, Orange County/California Works, Irvine, California

BACKGROUND

My name is Don Mac Allister and I spent six years growing up in the foster care system. I left foster care and began my adult life on “the streets” with a \$100 loan from my group home. I had no idea how to find and keep a job so that I could become financially self-supporting. One of my “street” friends finally took me to a telephone sales “boiler room” where I secured my first job. As I was fired from a series of jobs I realized that because of my life circumstances, I had gained the perception that I was a “victim.” This mindset caused me to seek shortcuts in life. Fortunately one of my supervisors pointed out the changes which I needed to make and educated me as to how to perform on the job so that I could stay employed. And unlike so many others, I escaped from the aloneness and dangers of living on “the street.” Because of this painful experience, I have endless motivation to help others who are facing a similar struggle.

If I had received job readiness training and had acquired a part-time job while in high school, I would have been better prepared to obtain a full time job upon graduation.

Would not all parents be horrified at the thought of having their 18-year old end up on “the street” without money, housing, or support? Yet this is the fate of over 10,000 foster youth each year.

What happens to these suddenly “independent” teenagers? Statistics show that more than 50 percent of children who leave foster care either become homeless, end up in prison or on welfare, and 60% of the girls become unwed mothers within 18 months.

Why do foster care teenagers suffer this fate? This is because they have not been prepared with essential job readiness skills to succeed at “independent living.” Being trained and gaining work experience while still in high school would contribute greatly to their becoming working, productive members of society, and thereby avoid turning to crime or relying on welfare to survive.

The “Orange County WORKS” program (a privately funded California non-profit organization) which I founded, provides job readiness training, job placements, and assists in finding higher paying jobs after the initial placement, for foster care, probation and other at-risk teens.

The mission of “Orange County WORKS” is to provide the lowest possible cost-per-placement system to help at-risk teens throughout Orange County break the cycle of dependency on government programs, and become productive members of the community. This means that at-risk youths become employed, financially independent, and give something back to the community.

“Orange County WORKS” is achieving a higher rate of placement of foster care and probation teens in jobs, while doing so at the lowest cost-per-placement of any Independent Living Skills program in California, as indicated below:

	OC WORKS	CA ILS Gov. Program
Percentage of trainees placed in jobs	45%	17%
Cost per placement	\$740.00	\$3,833.00

(Note: The above figures are for calendar year 1998, and are derived from California's Annual Independent Living Program Statistical Report, and "Orange County WORKS" Annual Youth Employment Report.)

At "Orange County WORKS," we use performance standards to measure our success. We also use these performance standards as financial incentives to motivate our staff, so that they continually strive to achieve a greater number of job placements. Additionally, when seeking funding, we present our results to our local business/donor community. They provide funds to "Orange County WORKS," because we help at-risk youths obtain jobs, and thus avoid a life of crime or welfare dependency. This results in a reduction in crime and other social ills, which benefits our entire local community.

Clearly, the approach used by "Orange County WORKS" is successful, and proves that a high rate of placement can be achieved at a lower cost, and helps improve our society.

CONCLUSION

First, I propose that the Independent Living Skills legislation must provide training of essential job-related skills (including basic computer and internet skills training). Foster teens must receive these skills during the two-year period, prior to emancipation. Second, I propose that for-profit as well as non-profit training organizations be allowed to receive Federal Independent Living Skills funding. The need is for the best training at the lowest cost. Excluding for-profit trainers from consideration can only hinder this. The current language of the Independent Living Skills legislation does exclude the hiring of for-profit Independent Living Skills trainers with Federal Independent Living Skills funds.

Third, I recommend that Independent Living Skills providers receive funding based on performance standards similar to those utilized by "Orange County WORKS," including:

- Number of youths trained in job related skills.
- Percentage of trainees placed in jobs.
- Number of youths placed in jobs.

(The adult welfare employment program operated by Lockheed Martin for the Private Industry Council in Dallas, Texas, is a successful example of this approach, which perhaps should be emulated.)

By having Independent Living Skills funding allocations based on performance standards, the number of foster youths trained and placed in jobs will significantly increase. And, this will greatly encourage Independent Living Skills organizations to operate in a more cost-efficient manner.

By incorporating these proposed changes to the Independent Living Skills Act, foster teenagers will be better equipped to obtain employment at a crucial phase in their lives. Also, costs for training, and for placing foster youths in jobs should be reduced.

Additionally, by adopting our proposal, there will be other significant benefits for our society. Costs related to both welfare and to other social services programs will be substantively reduced, as well as costs associated with the criminal justice system. Clearly, the impact of these changes cannot be overstated.

Thank you for your consideration of my proposals.



March 1, 1999

The Honorable Robert T. Matsui
 c/o Debbie Banks, Legislative Assistant
 Congress of the United States
 2308 Rayburn Building
 Washington, DC 20515-0505

Dear Congressman Matsui:

Congressman Christopher Cox has nominated Don Mac Allister, President of Orange County Works, to testify before the Human Services Committee on March 9th regarding the challenges confronting kids aging out of foster care.

Orange County Works holds training sessions for foster children prior to their leaving foster care, to teach them how to interview, obtain, and hold jobs so they will have the ability to care for themselves when state funding ends. Sixty percent of the foster children leaving foster care wind up homeless and on welfare. Don will be asking the committee to enact changes to federal law to place more emphasis on job readiness training and placement for these children.

I met Don over ten years ago and have supported him both spiritually and financially as he has grown from seeking funding for trips to Knotts Berry Farm to conducting job workshops. He has dedicated his life to helping foster children prepare themselves for a rich and productive life. He knows from bitter experience, having been unemployed and homeless himself, what these kids face when they are left at age eighteen without a home or financial support. He has built a tremendous organization with only the support of local businesses.

Please lend your support to his plea. It is a worthy cause and will be beneficial to both foster children and taxpayers, as these kids will be able to support themselves and not be dependent on the welfare system.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Walter C. Jr.", written in a cursive style.

President & CEO

WC/jh
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 Fax: 949-450-8710

Dear Congressman Robert T. Matsui,

I am writing in support of amending Section 677 (Independent Living Initiatives) of the Social Security Act. I am a supporter of Don Mac Allister and Orange County WORKS and his efforts to enact changes to federal law to place more emphasis on job readiness and job placement for foster teens.

Statistics show that more than 50 percent of children who leave foster care become homeless, go to prison, or end up on welfare.

This is about American teenagers who leave our foster care system to live on their own. The term is "emancipation". "Emancipation" means that an 18 or 19 year-old girl or boy is leaving "care", and going out onto our streets to fend for herself/himself.

The first thing such a teenager needs is a paying job. Foster care needs to begin addressing that need directly and effectively. Children in foster care need:

- 1) To be made aware of the realities involved with the fact that they will be going alone onto the streets on a specific date
- 2) To be trained and encouraged to seek employment
- 3) To receive the most effective training at the lowest cost to taxpayers – period. Private providers should be considered along with government or non-profit agencies.

To these ends, I support changing the language of Section 477 (b) and (d) of the Social Security Act as follows

The amendment I support involves the addition of:

1. The words "to seek job readiness training and job placement services and build work experience and marketable skills..." to Section 477 (d) item (1) line 48 after the words "Enable participants...." The sentence would then read:

"Enable participants to seek job readiness training, job placement services and build work experience and marketable skills and seek a high school diploma or its equivalent or to take part in appropriate vocational training".

2. Second, add the words "or for-profit" to section (b) line 34 after the words "private non-profit...." The sentence would then read:

"Payment under this section shall be made to the state, and shall be used for the purpose of conducting and providing in accordance with this section (directly or under contracts with local governmental entities or private non-profit or for-profit organizations) the activities and services required to carry out the program or programs involved".

Conclusion

Again, the point is that we need to raise performance standards for Independent Living Skills providers to by ensuring that job related skills are being taught so that teens can successfully make the transition from foster care to become working, independent members of society.

Thank you for your services to the country, and for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Henry Samueli, Ph.D.
 Co-Chairman of the Board
 Chief Technical Officer



March 5, 1999

The Honorable Robert T. Matsui
c/o Debbie Banks, Legislative Assistant
Congress of the United States
2308 Rayburn Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Matsui:

I am writing in support of amending Section 677 (Independent Living Initiatives) of the Social Security Act. I am a supporter of Don Mac Allister and Orange County WORKS and his efforts to enact changes to federal law to place more emphasis on job readiness and job placement for foster teens.

Statistics show that more than 50 percent of children who leave foster care become homeless, go to prison, or end up on welfare.

This is about American teenagers who leave our foster care system to live on their own. The term is "emancipation." "Emancipation" means that an 18 or 19 year-old girl or boy is leaving "care," and going out onto our streets to fend for herself/himself.

The first thing such a teenager needs is a paying job. Foster care needs to begin addressing that need directly and effectively. Children in foster care need:

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Conclusion

Again the point is that we need to raise performance standards for Independent Living Skills providers by making sure they and the teens are clear on what the #1 Independent Living Skill is; e.g., unsubsidized work experience and building of marketable skills. We also need the most effective independent living training for the foster teenagers that we can buy for our tax dollars. If a local for-profit agency does a better job for the money, then let's hire them!

Thank you for your services to the country, and for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

KINGSTON TECHNOLOGY COMPANY



John Tu
President

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A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION
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March 2, 1999

Congressman Robert T. Matsui
c/o Nick Gwynn Human Resources
Sub-Committee
1106 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Matsui:

I am writing in support of amending Section 677 (Independent Living Initiatives) of the Social Security Act. I am a supporter of Don Mac Allister and Orange County WORKS and his efforts to enact changes to Federal law to place more emphasis on job readiness and job placement for foster teens. Statistics show that more than 50% of children who leave foster care become homeless, go to prison, or end up on welfare.

Our foster care system does not address this reality adequately. Typically, it neither impresses this reality on the kids in its care, nor offers training to properly address it. These kids need to get and keep jobs. They need gainful employment to take care of themselves. Foster care needs to recognize job readiness training and unsubsidized work experience as the undisputed primary "Independent Living Skills." We need to provide the most effective training at the lowest cost to taxpayers. Private providers of job readiness training should be considered along with government or nonprofit agencies.

To these ends, I support changing the language of Section 477(b) and (d) of the Social Security Act as follows:

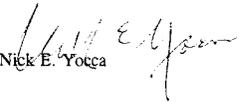
1. Add the words "or for-profit" to Section 477(b), line 34, after the words "private non-profit . . ."
2. Add the words "to seek job readiness training and job placement services and build work experience and marketable skills . . ." to Section 477(d), item (1), line 48, after the words "Enable participants . . ."

March 2, 1999
Page Two

We need the most effective Independent Living Training for the foster kids that we can buy for our tax dollars. If a local for-profit agency does a better job for the money, then let's hire them. We also need to raise performance standards for ILS providers by making sure they and the foster kids are clear on what the number one Independent Living Skill is, *e.g.*, unsubsidized work experience and building of marketable skills.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Very truly yours,


Nick E. Yocca

NEY:mh
cc: Don Mac Allister

PROJECT
TOMORROW
Partnership for Science Education

March 3, 1999

Congressman Robert T. Matsui
 C/o Nick Gwynn
 Human Resources Sub-Committee
 1106 Longworth Building
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Matsui:

I am writing in support of amending Section 677 (Independent Living Initiatives) of the Social Security Act. I am a supporter of Don MacAllister and Orange County WORKS and his efforts to enact changes to federal law to place more emphasis on job readiness and job placement for foster teens.

Statistics show that more than 50 percent of children who leave foster care become homeless, go to prison or end up on welfare.

Our foster care system does not address this reality adequately. Typically, it neither impresses this reality on the kids in its care, nor offers training to properly address it.

These kids need to get and keep jobs. They need gainful employment to take care of themselves. Foster care needs to recognize job readiness training and unsubsidized work experience as the undisputed primary "Independent Living Skills". We need to provide the most effective training at the lowest cost to taxpayers. Private providers of job readiness training should be considered along with government or non-profit agencies.

To these ends, I support changing the language of Section 477 (b) and (d) of the Social Security Act as follows:

The amendment I support involves the addition of:

1. The words "to seek job readiness training and job placement services and build work experience and marketable skills..." to Section 477 (d) item (1) line 48 after the words, "Enable participant..." The sentence would then read:
 "Enable participants to seek job readiness training, job placement services and build work experience and marketable skills and seek a high school diploma or its equivalent or to take part in appropriate vocational training".
2. Second, add the words "or for-profit" to section (b) line 34 after the words "private non-profit..." The sentence would then read:

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"Payment under this section shall be made to the state, and shall be used for the purpose of conducting and providing in accordance with this section (directly or under contracts with local governmental entities or private non-profit or for profit organizations) the activities and services required to carry out the program or programs involved"...

Conclusion

Again, the point is that we need the most effective independent living training for the foster teenagers that we can buy for our tax dollars. If a local for-profit agency does a better job for the money, then let's hire them! We also need to raise performance standards for ILS providers by making sure they and the teens are clear on what the #1 Independent Living Skill is, EG: unsubsidized work experience and building of marketable skills.

Thank you for your services to the country and for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Janice Turner
 Executive Director

JT/cll

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. I thank you very much, and I think it is very impressive that growing up as you did and leaving the system in the totally unstructured and really hazardous circumstances that you did, that you have not only succeeded in founding and running a business, but also in giving back to the system that served you only partially.

Mr. MACALLISTER. Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. We will turn to Mr. Garvey. Mr. Garvey.

**STATEMENT OF KEVIN M. GARVEY, COMMUNITY RELATIONS
 MANAGER, UNITED PARCEL SERVICE, LAUREL, MARYLAND**

Mr. GARVEY. Good afternoon, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to appear before your Subcommittee today. As you know, my name is Kevin Garvey, and I am the community relations manager for United Parcel Service in metro DC. And that district covers northern Virginia, Washington, DC, and surrounding Maryland metropolitan counties.

Over the last few years, I have been directly involved in some key areas. I have focused on work force development. And up until August 1998, most of those efforts zeroed in on school-to-work and welfare-to-work initiatives.

But in August 1998 that changed, and I became directly involved with the foster care population of Maryland, when we formed the UPS Partnership for Youth in Foster Care. The UPS Partnership for Youth in Foster Care is a community program. And it is facilitated by the Living Classrooms Foundation and is funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The partnerships objective is to engage young people from Maryland's foster care system in a work-and-learning experience at UPS, a work-and-learning experience that expands their opportunities for career and academic success in the future.

In 1999, the partnership has a goal for transitioning 75 foster care children to a quality workplace and learning experience. And the partners enjoy the following goals:

Number one, to prepare youth in foster care for employment through general and UPS-specific work readiness training. Two, identify qualified and interested youth in foster care, including youth from Living Classrooms fresh-start program for the UPS opportunity. Three, facilitate the placement of youth in part-time positions at UPS facilities in Burtonsville and Landover, Maryland. The youth start at \$8.50 to \$9.50 an hour and they enjoy full medical benefits and can take advantage of our onsite college classes as well as use our computer learning facility. Four, schedule career and academic goal-setting sessions with a UPS mentor for youth in foster care that are working at UPS. And five, maintain close daily contact with those youth in foster care after they are hired to best ensure their success on the job.

This partnership, in my opinion, is unique in the broad scope of the partners themselves. They are the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the State of Maryland Department of Human Resources, Bridges to Work, the Glen Arden Campus of Opportunity, Living Classrooms Foundation, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Baltimore City, and Prince George's County Department of Social Services.

In our involvement with this partnership, we have learned five valuable lessons. First, it doesn't matter what the initiative is called, school to work, welfare to work, and so forth., if it prepares and transitions folks to society's available work force, then it is work force development.

Second, different initiatives target specific population segments. However, all of these segments share similar and like societal barriers. For instance, low-skill levels, lack of transportation, child-care issues, an underdeveloped work ethic.

Third, the foster care population bridges the spectrum of most, if not all, current work force-development initiatives.

Fourth, more companies would engage ongoing efforts if third-party participation were expanded and an emphasis placed on the measurement of outcomes.

And fifth, and last, we have enjoyed the expertise provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation with the foster care population. And for those of you who don't know, the Annie E. Casey Foundation is a UPS-funded philanthropy.

And the painful lesson, the fifth and last painful lesson that we have learned, is how severe the need is for employer-driven efforts to serve this population. And if Congress chooses to allocate additional funding to support transitional training for foster care children, we urge you to screen the funding to civic organizations that have the ability to impact the foster care population directly.

I believe effective civic organizations will be those that can provide one-stop solutions that overcome an employer's reservations about hiring someone either through school-to-work or welfare-to-work or a foster care program.

For example, in Maryland, the Workforce Services Corp., formerly known as the Prince George's Private Industry Council, is setting a standard for providing solutions to difficult-to-serve populations.

Another example is a local private nonprofit called the Living Classrooms Foundation, and they are located in Baltimore. The foundation has extensive experience developing and implementing educational intervention for disadvantaged and at-risk youth. Every year, they serve tens of thousands of students and foster care children.

The UPS foster care initiative relies heavily on this organization for not only work force preparation but for program and system assessment. And currently they are helping us develop a management-training program for our frontline management folks to make them more sensitive to some of these societal issues.

I thank you again for the opportunity to be here this afternoon, and would entertain any questions either in writing or orally.

[The prepared statement follows:]

Statement of Kevin M. Garvey, Community Relations Manager, United Parcel Service, Laurel, Maryland

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS: THE UPS PARTNERSHIP FOR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

The UPS Partnership for Youth in Foster Care is a community program facilitated by the Living Classrooms Foundation. The partnership's objective is to engage young people from Maryland's foster care system in a work and learning experience at United Parcel Service (UPS) that expands their opportunities for career and academic success in the future. In 1999, the partnership has a goal of transitioning 75 foster care children to a quality workplace and learning experience. The partners work to achieve goals:

- By preparing youth in foster care for employment through general and UPS-specific work readiness training
- By identifying qualified and interested youth in foster care, including youth from Living Classrooms' Fresh Start Program, for the UPS opportunity
- By facilitating the placement of youth in Part-Time positions at UPS's Burtonsville and Landover, Maryland facilities. Youth start at \$8.50-\$9.50/hour with full medical benefits and on-site college courses
- By scheduling career and academic goal setting sessions with a UPS School-to-Work mentor for youth in foster care employed at UPS
- By maintaining close contact with youth in foster care after hire to best ensure their success on the job

This partnership is unique in the broad scope of the participants (partners). They are: United Parcel Service, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, State of Maryland Department of Human Resources, Bridges to Work, The Glenarden Campus of Opportunity, The Living Classrooms Foundation, and Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, and Prince George's County Departments of Social Services.

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS: WELFARE-TO-WORK

Welfare to work efforts have been a part of UPS for the past quarter century. We have some 40 Welfare to Work programs with local governments and organizations in 40 locations across the country. And in 1997 alone, we hired more than 10,000 former welfare recipients.

UPS is a founding member of the national The Welfare to Work Partnership, a national alliance of businesses engaged in programs which help people leave welfare. UPS employees also participate on several state and local task forces, which develop creative employment and transportation solutions for supporting the success of School-and Welfare to Work participants.

Those jobs pay above-average compensation for entry-level employees. The benefits package covers the worker's families and includes full health care coverage, hospitalization, medical, dental, and vision. In addition, our benefits package includes short-term disability, accidental death insurance, life insurance, tuition assistance, paid vacations and holidays.

We believe in community responsibility. We give our money and our time to charity, while we know the difference between charity and business. When we hire people—that's business. And a business-like approach is needed to remove the barriers that block increased hiring of welfare recipients.

President Clinton recently noted that 94 percent of welfare recipients do not have automobiles. There's no doubt about it—this is a major barrier, because most jobs are located away from neighborhoods where welfare recipients live.

Public transportation would seem to be the answer. But a recent Department of Transportation study in Boston of welfare recipients and jobs found the following: only 14 percent of potential employers could be reached by public transit within an hour. . . only 33 percent within 1 and ½ hours. . . and just over 50 percent of the jobs could even be reached within two hours. I suspect similar situations exist around the country.

The transportation situation cries out for a collaborative effort. We need community activists to cobble together—one by one, community by community—programs that address the transportation issue. We need the assistance of community activists who build databases and work with local government, labor and business.

RODNEY CARROLL: UPS LOANED EXECUTIVE, WELFARE-TO-WORK PARTNERSHIP

Let me share the experiences of one of our executives who is on loan to The Welfare to Work Partnership. His name is Rodney Carroll. In his capacity, Rodney reaches out to businesses and encourages them to get involved in Welfare to Work initiatives.

As the former manager of UPS's air hub in Philadelphia, Rodney knows firsthand the challenges and benefits of hiring former welfare recipients. He started that city's program by actively recruiting from local welfare offices. He even organized transportation for welfare recipients living across the river in Camden, NJ who wanted to work at UPS but had no way to get there. The UPS bus system became so heavily used that the New Jersey Transit system took over the route and now operates it on a full-time basis.

Through more than 40 Welfare to Work programs across the country, UPS collaborates with government agencies, faith-based groups, and non-profit organizations to develop, train and mentor qualified candidates for positions at UPS and other area businesses. Since January of 1997, UPS has hired well over 15,000 welfare recipients.

Former welfare recipients hired by UPS earn the same pay and benefits as other employees holding the same job. They also gain the advantage of working for a company that pays above-average compensation for entry-level employees and provides an especially strong benefits package. For example, this package covers the worker and their family and includes medical, dental, and vision coverage. What's more, there is ample opportunity for advancement, because UPS has a policy of promoting from within.

Susan Miller, UPS Training Supervisor—In Her Own Words

Susan Miller is an example of someone overcoming enormous obstacles to return to the workplace. As the single mother of three small children, Susan knew that she wanted to set a good example for them by getting off welfare. She was hired by UPS in 1996 as a package sorter and quickly gained the admiration and trust of her managers and co-workers. As a result, Susan was promoted to a supervisor position. She now trains all new UPS hires in our Atlanta Pleasantdale Hub on how to do their jobs quickly and efficiently in order to provide the quality service which UPS's requires.

In her own words, Susan states:

“I was on public assistance for almost four years before I started working at UPS. Now I am working everyday to make a better life for my children and myself. Having a job builds your confidence and your self-esteem, which makes you want to do an even better job. My children recognize my new confidence and know that it is due to my job at UPS.”

“I knew one day I would be able to find a job like this. I just didn't know where to start looking. I was introduced to UPS when my mother saw a postcard that UPS was hiring. That was over three years ago and I am still just as happy to go to work everyday as I was the day I started.”

“Let me tell you a little about my job at UPS. As a part-time supervisor, I receive a good monthly salary and full health care coverage, hospitalization, medical, dental, vision, short-term disability, accidental death insurance, life insurance, tuition assistance, paid vacations and holidays. One thing you might not know is my family is covered under UPS benefits as

well. I no longer have to worry about how I'll afford to send my children to the doctor when they get sick."

"Contrary to popular belief, welfare recipients want to work. They are responsible people who, if given the right opportunity, will be committed employees. They want to provide a better life for their families. They want to take home a paycheck every week. But, they need jobs that can provide good wages and benefits that do not make them question their decision to get off public assistance."

"When I started working at UPS I had a lot of questions. Questions about the job, transportation, childcare and my future at the company. As I have grown with the company, my supervisors have been very supportive and have taught me a lot. It is very important for employers to provide resources to employees hired off welfare so that they do not get frustrated and quit. Sometimes just knowing there is someone you can go to who will answer your questions and be on your side is the difference between failure and success."

"I work hard everyday for my children. They are the future. I want my kids to know that their mom worked as hard as she could to make a better life for them. I hope that I can offer my life challenges as an example to others that you can make life better off of welfare. It is hard in the beginning, but encouragement and motivation is the key to a new, successful life."

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS: SCHOOL-TO-WORK

American businesses have learned firsthand that many young people leave high school—and college—ill prepared for jobs. Some don't have even the basic skills they need to become viable employees. School-to-work programs are helping to close the gap between skills students have when they leave high school and the skills they need to keep up in today's changing workforce.

UPS became a partner in the School to Work initiative because it adds very real business value to our company.

Because of our ever-growing need for part-time workers, we have actively participated in programs to bring students and young people into our workforce for more than 25 years. Those early initiatives weren't called "School to Work," and weren't aimed necessarily at high school seniors, but the concept was similar.

The School-to-Work initiative provides many young people their first exposure to the workplace and their first opportunity to tackle the challenges of work. Interacting with successful adults in the workplace gives students a vivid picture of many exciting career paths. High school students who never thought they could finish school suddenly have a reason to learn. Many are inspired to pursue advanced degrees.

Programs like this ease the transition between school and work for all students, but especially for at-risk and economically disadvantaged students. Young people who have never seen an adult go to work are able to connect learning with "real-life" working experiences. And most importantly, they also gain responsibility, self-esteem, and a sense of accomplishment. How else do we know the School-to-Work program is working?

Numbers tell part of the story. We hired 1,169 high school seniors at the beginning of the 1997/1998 academic year. Only 91 have dropped out—that's a retention rate of nearly 93 percent. And a total of 36 students have been promoted to part-time supervisors in the various locations where the programs operate.

Next fall the numbers will be even larger. In Chicago, the program began in 1997 with 30 students. Now we have more than 200.

In Louisville—where seniors work at the UPS Air Operation facility during the daytime—it has also been successful in attracting students even though it has the most stringent guidelines. In the fall of 1996, the Louisville School-to-Work program began with about 60 students. In the fall of 1998, it will have 300 students participating—and they were chosen from more than 500 interviewees.

Another proof of success is that the number of those students who maintain a better than C average has also increased steadily in all of our locations.

School-to-work students have been some of our best—and most motivated—employees. We also find these students have less absenteeism and tardiness compared to other employees—and they are more safety conscious—a very important factor for us. All of these things have a direct impact on us and our ability to be a successful company.

The official School to Work program is aimed at high school seniors, but UPS's efforts have gone beyond the official definition. Innovative partnerships are allowing us to take school-to-work concept beyond high school graduation.

An excellent example of what partnerships can do will happen when our new Hub 2000 opens in Louisville. We will be faced with a critical shortage of part-time workers when the Hub opens. That problem is being solved through partnerships with the University of Louisville, several other community colleges and with local and state governments.

The "Hub of the Future" will double the capacity of UPS's current Louisville facility and it will require an additional 6,000 workers. UPS worked with Kentucky's leaders in education, business and government to come up with a plan to attract new part-time workers in an overwhelmingly tight job market.

Some of our current School-to-Work students in Louisville will find they can go to college full time, while they continue their UPS job and employment with full benefits. They may even want to live in the specially designed dormitory, which will cater to students who work and take classes at night and have to sleep during the day.

If School and Welfare-to-Work programs are going to succeed, community partnerships will be even more important—just like they were for us in Louisville for the Hub 2000 project. Government, non-profits, business and education each have a specific role to play.

Government should provide the public funding to match the private corporate and foundation funding for successful non-profit organizations. Also, government must be more supportive in the area of transportation and public facilities, which only they can make available.

Educational institutions should teach employability skills and ease the transition to work. They should also provide:

- Flexible scheduling
- Academic credit for work experience
- Counselors for transition
- On-site instructors (teachers) where applicable
- Internships
- Recognition of School-to-Work graduates
- Collaborative links with business

And, of course, businesses must provide good jobs and on-the-job training.

We believe the success of School-to-Work programs will continue to depend upon partnerships with key community players including government agencies, educators, non-profit organizations and businesses.

UPS's School to Work programs incorporate classroom training and real world work experience to help students successfully transition from high school or college to employment. These programs not only provide students with essential skills for job success and help boost self-esteem; their contributions to a productive work force in turn benefit their surrounding community. School to Work programs are coordinated in partnership with government agencies, non-profit organizations, local school systems, and institutions of higher education.

UPS's School to Work programs operate in Chicago, Dallas, Louisville, Ky. and Washington, D.C. The programs provide students 17 and older with the opportunity to earn college credit while working part-time at UPS. Many students involved in the program graduate from high school with three or more college courses already under their belt plus experience at one of the country's top corporations. And, should they choose to go to college, UPS has a tuition assistance program for which they may be able to qualify if they continue to work part-time at the company.

UPS's newest School to Work program began in September 1998 in Louisville, Ky., the headquarters for the company's air operations. While Louisville continues to have its traditional School to Work program for high school students, it has also launched Metropolitan College, a ground breaking program for college students.

A result of combined efforts by UPS, the state of Kentucky and three area colleges, Metropolitan College offers students part-time employment at UPS and eligibility for free college tuition. Metropolitan students earn competitive wages and full employee benefits; work shifts are scheduled to accommodate daytime classes.

In all UPS School to Work programs, students are assigned a UPS mentor who is responsible for monitoring their progress in school and work. Those who excel in school are rewarded with incentive programs. "We offer advice to students and try to show them the correct way to balance their responsibilities," said Melissa Smith, a mentor in the Louisville facility. "We don't solve their problems for them. We just give them the tools they can use to help themselves."

CONCLUSION

If Congress chooses to allocate additional funding to support transitional training for foster care children, we urge you to stream the funding to civic organizations that have the ability to impact the foster care population.

I believe effective civic organizations will be those that can provide one-stop solutions that overcome an employer's reservations about hiring someone through School-to-Work, from welfare or foster care programs. For example, in Maryland, the Workforce Services Corporation formerly known as the Prince George's Private Industry Council, is setting the standard for providing solutions to difficult-to-serve populations.

Another example is a local private non-profit called The Living Classrooms Foundation located in downtown Baltimore. The Foundation has extensive experience developing and implementing educational interventions for disadvantaged and at-risk youth. They serve over 50,000 students per year. The UPS Foster Care initiative relies heavily on this organization for workforce preparation, program assessment, and development of management training programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the "Challenges Confronting Older Children Leaving Foster Care."

Thank you, Madam Chair, Congressman Cardin.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much, Mr. Garvey. That was extremely interesting and I commend UPS on their leadership.

Mr. Pinto, it is a pleasure to have you.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM PINTO, ADOLESCENT SERVICES CO-ORDINATOR, DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Mr. PINTO. Good afternoon, Chairman Johnson, Rep. Cardin, and the distinguished Members of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources. My name is Bill Pinto and I am the adolescent services coordinator for the Connecticut Department of Children and Families. I am a social worker with over 20 years experience in child welfare.

I started out as a protective service worker, children's protective service worker in the city of Hartford, serving gang-involved youth and older youth in out-of-home care, and for the past 10 years I have been developing Connecticut's Independent Living Program. In addition to my State hats, I am also one of the founders and past presidents of the National Independent Living Association, which is now comprised of over 200 members nationwide.

To me, the story about independent living in the United States is one of tragedy and triumph. The tragedy is that far too often graduates of the American child welfare system become America's homeless, prisoners, public-assistance recipients, and psychiatric patients. What little research there is on the outcomes of foster care graduates has produced startling and depressing data.

What is more depressing is that numbers have not changed in the last 15 years. The research shows that only half complete high school, less than half are employed, 38 percent maintain a job for over a year, 60 percent of the women have at least one child, 25 percent of the males spend time in prison, 25 percent are homeless at least one night, only 17 percent are completely self-supporting, and most experience high levels of depression and discouragement.

Furthermore, over half of the foster care graduates say no one helped them make plans for being on their own. The focus in the child welfare system has been on protecting and finding permanent living arrangements for children. Sadly, it has neglected providing youth with the services they need to acquire the social, emotional, and basic life skills necessary for the transition to adulthood and independence.

For most young people in America, leaving one's home to be on your own means voluntarily giving up the security of the family. You leave when emotionally and economically ready for independence. The move coincides with a positive event, such as getting married or landing that first big job. When setting up the first apartment, mom has saved silverware and dishes, Aunt Millie has the pullout couch in the basement, and dad may put a fresh coat of paint on the walls.

Most importantly, underneath it all, is the security of knowing that if it doesn't work out you can always go back home.

And don't all the parents of young adults in this room know that they often end up back at our front door. It is vastly different for kids that have grown up in foster care.

In foster care, you exit the system or you pass from care. You leave the custody of the child welfare system because you have reached that statutory age for release, that magical, mystical age of 18. You are off on your own, ready or not, expected to enter the community life and self-sufficiency without the aid of a family or a social service delivery system.

Young people in out-of-home care who frequently faced abuse, neglect, and rejection, often have a weak sense of identity. They are less resilient and less confident in their abilities. Not only must they face independence in this fragile state, but they usually face it alone.

The triumph part of the independent living story describes what is possible when you support these young people. They have the potential; they need the skills, the guidance, and the assistance.

In Connecticut, we have seen the positive results of an Independent Living Program that supports our youth before and after they move out on their own. We offer a continuum of services from life-skills-in-education training, transitional-living programs, subsidized-apartment programs, and after-care services.

You heard from Reggie Rollins, a 21-year-old from Stamford, Connecticut, one of our many shining stars. Reggie's life, as with our other youth, has not been easy by any stretch of the imagination, and his journey to independence has not been smooth, but Reggie is making it.

While Reggie deserves the lion's share of the credit, I must modestly acknowledge that our Independent Living Program has been with him all along the way. When Reggie turned 21 last month, we did not say you are on your own now, good luck.

Reggie continues to live in a subsidized apartment and will complete this educational year. This is only because the Connecticut Department of Children and Families commissioner, Kristine Ragaglia, made a commitment to help our young adults like Reggie until they complete their college education.

She believes it is only right.

My goal is for all States in the country to adopt the supports for older youth that we have in Connecticut. That is why I am urging the Federal Government to mandate that States provide a continuum of independent living services. That continuum should include community-based life skills, education, and training for youth in foster and kinship care, transitional group homes and apartments for young people who need 24-hour structure and supervision, which can provide intensive follow-up in areas of life skills, health, mental health, education, and vocation.

Subsidized, supervised community housing options to enable young people to live on their own but with continuous support and assistance with budgeting and other issues.

As my friend and colleague, Marc Croner, says, independent living without an apartment is like a driver's license without a car.

And finally, after care, a network of community-based helpers to provide assistance as youth transition to a productive community life. These services should emanate from a comprehensive treatment plan developed with youth, based on their individual strengths and needs. The plan should prepare for the young person's transition to the community, should manage that transition, and provide follow-up after the transition.

I have spoken to the board of directors of NILA and other colleagues around the country to gain their insight on the core elements necessary for the Independent Living Program. Many of these components are covered in H.R. 671. They are as follows:

The recommended changes in Title IV-E will provide States not providing services to youth past age 18 an incentive to do so, and will reward the States that have dedicated State funds to independent living maintenance programs for young people up to age 21.

It addresses the issue of assets allowable to foster care youth. Most Independent Living Programs allow participants to have savings plans which promote savings and investment and also provide program graduates with an adequate nest egg to begin life on their own.

ILP graduates who have contributed to personal savings plans should not be penalized by becoming ineligible for title XIX and other social services.

And finally, the bill also contains a much needed plan to promote collaboration within Federal agencies to promote the Independent Living Program.

In addition to support for H.R. 671, there is also consensus for four other areas. One, lowering the eligible age for independent living services from age 16 to 14. Age 16 is too late. The earlier the young person becomes involved in an independent living preparation and specialized case management services, the more positive the outcome.

Two, providing incentives to States that allow youth to leave voluntarily at age 18 to re-enter the system if requested by the young person anytime prior to the age of 21.

Third, promoting positive youth development in Independent Living Programs, especially youth-empowerment and youth-adult partnership. Rewards and incentives should be provided to States that have developed local and statewide youth advisory boards.

In Connecticut, our youth advisory board has been invaluable in giving upper management, including the commissioner, ideas for better serving our teens in care.

And finally, funding for research and evaluation. For the Independent Living Program to progress effectively, we must understand where we are and learn from the graduates of our services, how to plan for the future.

In closing, I want to remember a young man named Willie Palmer. The case of *Willie Palmer v. Mario Cuomo* was the genesis of the national independent living movement. We need to remember his tragic life, how he was found out on the street with no more than his State suitcase, that plastic garbage bag carrying his few possessions. And how he died a violent death on the streets trying to stay alive.

We must never forget the Willie Palmers. At the same time, we must remember with the right support, preparation, and opportunities, we will see more young adults like Reggie Rollins go on to take their rightful place in society. These young people have suffered enough. We need to make sure that they are not victimized by the system established to provide their care.

In Connecticut, we have seen first-hand the success that these young people can achieve when given the support they need. We can help them turn their lives from tragedy to triumph. It is only right.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement follows:]

Statement of William Pinto, Adolescent Services Coordinator, Department of Children and Families, Hartford, Connecticut

Good afternoon Congresswoman Johnson, Representative Cardin and distinguished members of the House Ways and Means' Subcommittee on Human Resources. My name is Bill Pinto and I am the Adolescent Services Coordinator for the Connecticut Department of Children and Families. I am a social worker with over 20 years experience in child welfare. Ten years were spent as a child protective services worker in the city of Hartford, serving gang-involved youth and older youth in out-of-home care. For the past 10 years, I have been developing Connecticut's Independent Living Program (ILP). I am also one of the founders and past presidents of the National Independent Living Association (NILA), which is now comprised of over 200 members nationwide.

To me, the story of Independent Living in the United States is one of 'tragedy and triumph.' The tragedy is that, far too often, graduates of the American child welfare system become America's homeless, prisoners, public assistance recipients, and psychiatric patients.

What little research there is on the outcomes for foster care graduates has produced startling and depressing data. What is more depressing is that the numbers have not changed in the last 15 years. The research shows that:

- only half complete high school;
- less than half are employed;
- 38% maintain a job for over a year;
- 60% of the women have at least one child;
- 25% of the males spend time in prison;
- 25% are homeless at least one night;
- only 17% are completely self supporting; and
- most experience high levels of depression and discouragement.

Furthermore, over half of foster care grads say no one helped them make plans for being on their own.

The focus in the child welfare system has been on protecting and finding permanent living arrangements for children. Sadly, it has neglected providing youth with services they need to acquire the social, emotional, and basic life skills necessary for the transition to adulthood and independence.

For most young people in America, leaving one's home to be on your own means voluntarily giving up the security of the family. You leave when emotionally and economically ready for independence. The move out coincides with a positive event, such as getting married or landing that first big job. When setting up the first apartment, Mom has saved silverware and dishes, Aunt Millie has that pull-out couch in the basement, and Dad may put a fresh coat of paint on the walls. Most importantly, underneath it all is the security of knowing that if it doesn't work out, you can always go back home. (And don't all the parents of young adults in this room know that they often end up back at our front door?)

It's a vastly different story for kids who have grown up in foster care. In foster care, you "exit" the system or you "pass" from care. You leave the care or custody of the child welfare system because you have reached the statutory age for release, the magical age of 18. You're off on your own, ready or not, expected to enter community life and self-sufficiency without the aid of a family or social service system. Young people in out-of-home care who have frequently faced abuse, neglect and rejection, often have a weak sense of identity. They are less resilient and less confident in their abilities. Not only must they face independence in this fragile state, but they usually face it alone.

The 'triumph' part of the Independent Living story describes what is possible when you support these young people. They have the potential. They need the skills, the guidance, the assistance. In Connecticut, we have seen the positive results of an Independent Living Program that supports our youth before and after they move out on their own. We offer a continuum of services, from life skills and educational training, transitional living programs and subsidized apartment programs, and aftercare services.

You will hear from Reggie Rollins, a 21-year-old from Stamford, Connecticut—one of our many 'shining stars.' Reggie's life, as with our other youth, has not been easy, by any stretch of the imagination. And his journey to independence has not been smooth. But, he is making it. While Reggie deserves the lion's share of that credit, I must modestly acknowledge that our Independent Living Program has been with him all along the way. When Reggie turned 21 last month, we did not say, you're on your own now, good luck. Reggie continues to live in a subsidized apartment and will complete this educational year. This is only because the Connecticut Department of Children and Families' Commissioner, Kristine Ragaglia, made a commitment to help our young adults, like Reggie, until they complete their college education. She believes it's only right.

My goal is for all states in the country to adopt the supports for older youth that we have in Connecticut. That is why I am urging the federal government to mandate that states provide a continuum of independent living services. The continuum should include:

- *community based life skills education and training* for youth in foster and kinship care;
- *transitional living group homes and apartments* for young people who need 24-hour structure and supervision, which can provide intensive follow-up in areas of life skills, health, mental health, education, and vocation;
- *subsidized/supervised community housing options* to enable young people to live on their own, but with continuous support and assistance with budgeting and other issues. As my friend and colleague Mark Kroner says, "Independent Living without an apartment is like a driver's license without a car;" and
- *aftercare*—a network of community based helpers to provide assistance as youth transition to a productive community life.

These services should emanate from a comprehensive treatment plan developed with youth, based on their individual strengths and needs. The plan should prepare for the young person's transition to the community, manage that transition, and provide follow-up afterward.

I have spoken to the Board of Directors of NILA and other colleagues around the country to gain their insight on the core elements necessary for the Independent Living Program. Many of these components are covered in H.R. 671. They are as follows.

- The recommended changes in Title IV-E will provide states not providing services to youth past age 18 an incentive to do so and will reward the states that have dedicated funds to Independent Living maintenance programs for young people to age 21.
- It addresses the issue of assets allowable to foster care youth. Most Independent Living Programs allow participants to have savings plans which promote savings and investment, and also provide program graduates with an adequate nest egg to begin life on their own. ILP graduates who contribute to a personal savings plan should not be penalized by becoming ineligible for Title XIX or other social services.

- This bill also contains a much-needed plan to promote collaboration within federal agencies to promote Independent Living.

In addition to support for H.R. 671, there is also consensus on four other areas:

- lowering the eligible age for Independent Living services from age 16 to 14. Age 16 is too late. The earlier the young person becomes involved in independent living preparation and specialized case management services, the more positive the outcomes.

- providing incentives to states that allow youth who leave voluntarily at age 18 to re-enter the system if requested by the young person any time prior to age 21.

- promoting positive youth development in independent living programs, especially youth empowerment and youth/adult partnership. Rewards/incentives should be provided to states that have developed local and statewide youth advisory boards. In Connecticut, our Youth Advisory Board has been invaluable in giving upper management, including the Commissioner, ideas for better serving our teens in care.

- funding for research and evaluation. For the Independent Living Program to progress effectively, we must understand where we are and learn from the graduates of our services how to plan for the future.

In closing, I want to remember a young man named Willie Palmer. The case of “Willie Palmer vs. Mario Cuomo” was the genesis of the national Independent Living movement. We need to remember his tragic life—how he was found with no more than his ‘state suitcase’ (the plastic garbage bag that carried his few possessions), and how he died a violent death on the streets trying to stay alive. We must never forget the Willie Palmers. At the same time, we must remember that with the right support, preparation and opportunities, we will see more young adults like Reggie Rollins go on to take their rightful place in society.

These young people have suffered enough. We need to make sure that they are not victimized by the system established to provide their care. In Connecticut, we have seen first-hand the success these young people can achieve when given the support they need. We can help them turn their lives from tragedy to triumph. It’s only right.

Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much, Mr. Pinto.

Mr. Young.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM YOUNG, COMMISSIONER, VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND REHABILITATION SERVICES, ON BEHALF OF AMERICAN PUBLIC HUMAN SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Mr. YOUNG. Madam Chairman, Congressman Cardin, good afternoon. My name is William Young. I am the commissioner of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services in Vermont, the State’s child protection agency and also here on behalf of the American Public Human Services Association to talk about the issue of preparing older children leaving foster care for adult life.

I want to begin by thanking you both for your interest in these issues, and I know, Chairman Johnson, that for you child welfare is a matter of longstanding concern. And I applaud you both for your interest in this important issue.

Children leaving custody are particularly vulnerable. Unlike some people, who left loving but poor families and went out on their own at age 18 and succeeded, these children often have little or no resources. They may not have a family that cares or is willing to offer any kind of support for them, and often carry a tremendous weight of personal pain and loss as a result of sometimes horrendous histories of child abuse, histories that some of us may have in this room, but most, gratefully, do not.

In my own State of Vermont, we refer all youth in custody between the ages of 15 and 21 to regional coordinators, who, after an initial screening, provide such services as independent living preparation classes, assistance in employment exploration, finding and maintaining housing, and accessing community services, including substance abuse and mental health counseling.

There are also opportunities for community participation through service projects on such activities as local and a teen advisory board that give these youth a direct line of communication with me. We try to use all available existing services and programs, but we are not able to meet the needs of each youth who requires help.

Why do we think this kind of assistance is necessary and important? Aside from the obvious reason, it helps to create capacity for economic self-sufficiency rather than welfare-dependence, and successful citizenship, rather than involvement with corrections and child-protection systems as an adult.

There is not a one-size-fits-all solution. In Vermont, we have made significant progress in many areas of social well-being on outcomes, engaging local communities in planning and developing specific programs to achieve those outcomes and providing flexible fiscal support. This approach, which I would recommend to you as a model, would target badly needed Federal investments on the outcomes you desire for these children.

Give the States and local communities the flexibility required to design effective services, provide feedback that allows for change to occur if services in a given area are not delivering, and require accountability for achieving the desired outcomes.

As an example, and I know you have a chart, I think. This approach has resulted in a record 31-percent decline in child abuse in Vermont since 1992. Even more impressively, a 62-percent decline in child sexual-abuse victims, and a 43-percent decline in physical-abuse victims between the ages of zero to 6.

An effort to address the unmet needs of very high-risk young people leaving custody doesn't, of course, take place in a vacuum. Child welfare today is at a crossroads with States struggling to provide to all children and families, early identification and services to those who need it, and child protection services where it is necessary to assure child safety, permanency, and well-being.

We are implementing the Adoption and Safe Families Act and the additional requirements it imposes, the Court improvement project efforts, efforts to improve our adoption systems, and many others. It is a daunting task, but it is a task that we welcome. We believe that we are producing results, but it is clear that we need assistance and a sound partnership with the Federal Government.

The needs of the children sometimes outstrip our capacity to respond. We believe that it is vital to maintain the existing entitlement structure for IV-E but strongly support additional flexibility within that structure to target resources where they need to go.

We understand the constraints you are under to meet tight budget caps. However, we would unfortunately have to oppose any legislation that uses the TANF for social services block grants or the repeal of the child-support, hold-harmless provision or match rates as funding sources. The association has convened a work group to develop recommendations regarding changes in Federal child wel-

fare financing tied to flexibility, capacity and outcomes. And we do look forward to sharing those recommendations with you in the near future.

We are deeply appreciative of the Subcommittee's interest and the interest on the part of you both, particularly in that vulnerable group of young people leaving custody for adult life. If they are particularly at risk, they also possess a characteristic common to children the world over, and that is the capacity to rise above tragedy and to succeed.

And in closing, Madam Chairman and Congressman Cardin, I guess I would just say, I do personally and strongly believe that in their success lies a real nugget of hope for all of us in this society, and in their failure and our failure, if we don't correct it, I think lies some very destructive seeds for this Nation.

And so I applaud both of you for your leadership and interest in this area, and we look forward to working with you as an association and developing specific policy and funding proposals to address these needs.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement follows:]

Statement of William Young, Commissioner, Vermont Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, on behalf of American Public Human Services Association

Madam Chairman, Congressman Cardin, members of the Committee, good afternoon. My name is William Young. I am the Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, the state's child protection agency. I am also here today on behalf of the American Public Human Services Association to talk about the issue of preparing older children leaving foster care for adult life.

APHSA is a bipartisan organization of public human service agencies and individuals concerned with human service policy and its delivery.

I want to begin by thanking Chairman Johnson and Congressman Cardin for their interest in these issues. I know that for many of you, including Chairman Johnson, child welfare is a matter of long-standing concern.

Children leaving custody are particularly vulnerable. Unlike some of the people who may be in this room who went out on their own at age 18 and were successful, these children often have little or no resources, may not have a family that cares or is willing to offer any kind of support to them, and often carry a tremendous weight of personal pain and loss as a result of sometimes horrendous histories of child abuse—histories that some of us may have but most do not.

In my own State of Vermont we refer all youth in custody between the ages of 15 and 21 to regional Transitional Services Coordinators who, after an initial screening, provide such services as independent living preparation classes, assistance in vocational exploration, finding and maintaining housing, and accessing community services, including substance abuse and mental health counseling. There are also opportunities for community participation through service projects and such activities as local and a state-wide Youth Advisory Board, which give these youth a direct line of communication with me.

We try to use all available existing services and programs, but we are not able to meet the needs of each child who requires help.

Why do we think this kind of assistance is necessary and important? It helps to create capacity for economic self sufficiency rather than welfare dependence and successful citizenship rather than involvement with the Corrections and Child Protection systems as an adult.

There is not a "one size fits all" solution. In Vermont we have made significant progress in many areas of social well being by focusing on outcomes, engaging local communities in planning and developing specific programs to achieve the outcomes, and providing flexible fiscal support.

This approach, which I would recommend to you as a model, would target badly needed additional federal investments on the outcomes you desire for these children, give the States and local communities the flexibility required to design effective services, provide feedback that allows for change to occur if services in an area are

not delivering the desired results, and require accountability for achieving the desired outcomes.

As an example, this approach has resulted in a record 31% decline in child abuse in Vermont since 1992. Even more impressive is the 62% decline in sexual abuse victims between the ages of 0 to 6, and the 43% decline in physical abuse victims 0 – 6.

This effort to address the unmet needs of a very high-risk group of young people does not take place in a vacuum. Child Welfare today is at a crossroads, with States struggling to provide support to all children and families, early identification and services to those who need it, and child protection services where it is necessary to assure child safety, permanency and well-being. We are implementing the Adoption and Safe Families Act and the additional requirements it imposes, the Court improvement efforts, and the need to improve our adoption systems.

It is a daunting task, but one that we welcome. We believe that we are producing results, but it is clear that we need assistance and a sound partnership with the federal government. The needs of the children sometimes outstrip our capacity to respond.

We believe that it is vital to maintain the existing entitlement structure for IVE, but strongly support additional flexibility within that structure to target resources where they need to go.

Madam Chairman, we understand the constraints this subcommittee and the Congress are under to meet the tight budget caps set in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. We understand the initiatives we have been discussing will require a commitment of new federal resources. However, we urge the subcommittee not to reduce current or future federal support for critical human service programs to fund this new initiative. For example, if any reductions in the TANF or Social Services Block Grants or the repeal of the child support hold harmless provision or match rates are used as funding sources, then APHSA would be in the unfortunate position of opposing this legislation.

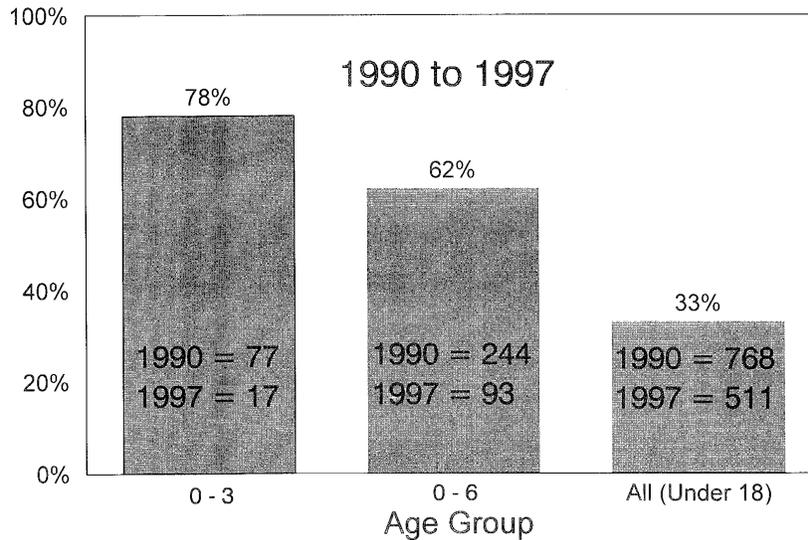
Over a year ago the Association convened a Work Group of state human service administrators and state and local child welfare directors to develop recommendations regarding changes in federal child welfare financing tied to flexibility, capacity and outcomes. We look forward to sharing those recommendations with you in the near future as they are finalized.

We are deeply appreciative of the Committee's interest in that particularly vulnerable group of young people leaving custody for adult life. If they are particularly at risk, they also possess a characteristic common to children the world over: the capacity to rise above tragedy and to succeed.

And we look forward to working with you to develop specific policy and funding proposals to address this issue.

Thank you.

VERMONT Decrease in Sexual Abuse



VERMONT Child Abuse Victims Continue to Decline

	1992	1996	1997	% Change 1996-97	% Change 1992-97
REPORTS					
Total	2,750	2,259	2,223	-2%	-19%
Substantiated	1,430	1,007	994	-1%	-30%
VICTIMS					
Total	1,498	1,064	1,041	-2%	-31%
Physical Abuse	426	282	266	-6%	-38%
Sexual Abuse	811	538	511	-5%	-37%
Neglect	110	95	66	-31%	-40%
Risk	326	240	296	+23%	-9%

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Well, first of all, let me say we do look forward to the results of your working group thinking through on the issue of flexibility, capacity, and outcome. I got involved in this in part many, many years ago as the chairman of the child guidance clinic in my little community. And so I, as a State senator, visited many, many of the facilities that provide

services to our children, both child protective services and services for delinquent youth.

And I introduced the first bill to provide parent aid in Connecticut. But the system has been very, very slow to be able to look at prevention, to be able to look at integration, to be able to take a holistic approach. And, indeed, as I have listened to you and the young people today, it is really quite staggering that we have now come so far in welfare reform, and looking at the plight of a woman on welfare and how right the decision was to make her stay on welfare if she couldn't get health care for her children any other way. And now how we have changed that, how we have focused services and broadened the network to support transition.

And a number of us are working on a bill—we passed it out of Ways and Means last year, we are going to improve it this year. It looks at disabled people and the need for them to get back in the program if they need help, the need for them to be able to retain health services while they get out there and start working until they get a job that has health services.

And indeed, it is really quite astounding how we have failed to understand the enormity of the challenge of becoming fully on your own from 1 day to the next at age 18. So we do take the testimony that we have heard here very seriously. In my past years on this Subcommittee, when I was first on it 6 years ago, I don't think we ever had—Ron and I were trying to remember—we may have included independent living as a part of a hearing, but I don't think we have ever had an entire hearing on the Independent Living Program.

And I think this is the right time. We just know so much more about how to support realistically and how to help. But I do think that the issue of the younger people needs to be addressed; years ago Bill knows we have talked about this program for a long time, and in visiting it, they would say to me, "But my sister needs to be in this, no, my younger brother." And we really do need to take a whole different attitude because these kids whether they are 10, 11, or 12, are going to face a whole different imperative at 18 than any child that I ever raised, or any child, frankly, I ever knew.

So I think we really have got to think through how do we prepare them for independence at 18 when our society doesn't do so. So you have given us a lot of good suggestions and really a lot of good information.

I did want to mention two things—get your input on two things. First of all, it does seem to me, that we are doing these kids a terrible disservice not to really focus to some extent on this sort of life skills business at 14, so by 16 they get a part-time job and we work with them through that interview. Not many hours a week, but a few hours a week because, for their education, that is every bit as important as getting their high school certificate, to know how to succeed in earning money.

And, many kids start working part-time at 16, but they don't have any guidance in finding a job that might look good on their resume or that they can learn from that has skills that are applicable. So I think we should be rethinking what the goal of independent living is along the way, not interfering with school, but complementing it.

And then the other thing I do want to bring up is your experience with key relationships. You know, the literature is very clear that a key relationship can make all the difference. So is there any way in your experience as administrators that, you could assign primarily more seasoned workers to this. A worker would be in contact with a person from age 14 and would be their key person.

When I visited a group called the Bridge, over Christmas, one of the kids said to me, "Why can't we choose our foster families?"

Well, it is not a bad question actually. Not a bad question at all. So if you can foster that relationship of interviewing and choice, working with that worker, and then you have the same worker all the way through, and life skills as a part of it, and job readiness, and job experience, you know, the whole thing, then that person is your person till 21.

So we just have to create continuity and a breadth of support that we just haven't even been thinking about.

So those issues of younger kids, of key relationships, of the role of work are all things I will certainly have on my mind as we go forward.

I am going to yield to my colleague, Mr. Cardin, because it is late, and we will give you each a chance for any comments you want.

Mr. CARDIN. Well, let me first just agree with the Chairman's observations. I think you have stated it well, and we are certainly going to work together on these issues.

Mr. Garvey, I particularly appreciate you mentioning the Living Classrooms, quite a resource we have in Maryland, which has grown dramatically over the last several years, starting basically from scratch just a few years ago. And the number of clientele that they reach every year is amazing.

I hadn't thought about its role in foster care, for children coming out of foster care. And I appreciate your bringing that connection. I have also visited UPS and seen what you have done first-hand, and congratulate you for your corporate citizenship in working with us. We need more of that.

It just seems, as I listen to all of your testimonies, that there is a common theme here. And that is that children reaching the age of 18 need skills in order to be independent, and that we need to work with them to get those skills as early as possible. But even if we are very successful, for most children reaching the age of 18, they are still going to need some assistance for their housing. They are going to need some help. They are going to need some protected environment, some assistance to be able to become successful, even if they have the skills already.

So that we need to have a more aggressive program. Now you have mentioned many programs in your States because of State initiatives or private initiatives or your ability to go get money from HUD, which I think is marvelous. I will have to encourage my State of Maryland to be more aggressive in that area. I am going to go back and talk to them.

And also I just really wanted to emphasize the point that Mr. Young and, I know, Ms. Nixon with the Child Welfare League, have been very vocal on, and that is there are a lot of related issues here, and one of them is the commitment we made to you

in TANF on funding. And that if we start to cut back on that commitment, it is going to make it more difficult for your budgets to be able to deal with protecting children. So we shouldn't be misled to think that if we make progress here, we had better not lose progress in other areas in order to have the financial wherewithal for our States to be able to provide these types of help.

Mr. Pinto, you have given us some good suggestions on improvements that we could make on the initiatives. I hadn't thought of some of the additional points that you made, I just really wanted to compliment you on that.

And let me throw on the table two areas that we haven't talked too much about. One is that in the legislation that I propose, we expand the tax credits for employers to make it easier for foster children to have job opportunities. That hasn't really been talked about much today. And second, some of you have alluded to savings; the legislation would increase the eligibility for children to be able to save more from \$1,000 to \$10,000 and not lose their Title IV-E eligibility, you may want to just comment whether either of those tools that are allowing children to save more or the tax credits could be useful in helping you place children in independent circumstances.

Ms. NIXON. Chairman Johnson, I think you have really, really hit on a key concept when you said something about continuity. And I think that is another theme that has run through everything that has been said here today, that there needs to be continuity for young people as they approach adulthood in their ability to make connections with adults that care about them, and connections to the world of work, and connections to education that allow them to achieve an educational goal.

When we talk about housing, there needs to be continuity. Young people need to have the ability to move from a foster home or a group home to an apartment program, to a community program and have flexibility in the amount of supervision, according to what they need, and the amount of support that they need.

Absolutely, I think that tax credit is a good idea, especially if there is education and information that is made available to employers and to community-based programs that serve young people about accessing those tax credits.

And we really think the savings issue is a critical one. There was a lot of feedback to us from the States about sending young people out on their own with only a thousand dollars in the bank that can't even help you make a security deposit in the first month. And people are having to spend too much time trying to think of ways to secure things instead of allowing young people to have savings that would help them get out there and establish themselves.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Ron reminds me, we ought to just ask you, Ms. Logan, how hard has it been to coordinate funding with HUD?

Ms. LOGAN. Well, we began in 1991—

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Slippery.

Ms. LOGAN. What?

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Slippery, huh? [Referring to the microphone.] [Laughter.]

Ms. LOGAN. You saw my smile, right?

Well, we began in 1991, a lot of lobbying, a lot of providing information to HUD. It took about 2 years to convince HUD that emancipated foster youth was a specific, defined population who were homeless on the street or who were at risk of being homeless. So somewhere between 2 and 3 years, we also met with members of our Congressional delegation, talking to people high up in HUD, using everything we had to get to the people at the top of HUD.

And so it took 2 to 3 years, and at the end of that 3-year period, they did say that this was a specific class of citizens who were at risk of becoming homeless. And then we applied for one grant in 1991. We didn't get it.

We applied for another grant in 1992, and we were successful. And since that time, we have taken the HUD money, and with the assistance of the Community Development Commission (CDC), the local agency that gets the HUD money, we have combined the HUD supportive housing money from CDBG funds and private dollars. And that is how we are able to get apartments, able to build apartment buildings in Los Angeles.

So I would say that it was a lot of hard work in the beginning, but now they are recognized as a specific population, and, like I say, we have 11 HUD grants now. We have learned a lot.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. That is very interesting and very helpful to us. Is there anything that any of you wants to add before we—

Ms. LOGAN. I just wanted to add one thing about a specific person to provide continuity inside the department. In our department, we have hired almost a hundred former foster youths as full-time county employees. And they are known as emancipation assistants and youth workers because they are still, some of them are still teenagers and they are very young, they are the ones who call our other teenagers to convince them to participate in independent living and some of the other voluntary programs that we have. And they are our best advocates because they have lived through it.

And like I say, we have a hundred of them, and they are full-time county employees.

And the only other thing I wanted to add is about jobs. It is really important that young people have a work history. So both the city and county of Los Angeles have set aside summer youth employment jobs from the JTPA, Job Training Partnership Act, money just for foster youth. So there are certain set-asides just for our young people so that when they leave foster care they will have a work experience and a resume that at least has two jobs. So they at least know what it means to go to work, get up, get to work on time, and to get along with people in the work environment.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. I appreciate that, and that's a very important thing. I think if we do our job right, foster care kids can start in part-time jobs at 16 and really get the experience that they need. We are not preparing them for that. So, they need to work.

Mr. YOUNG. I do think that trying to look at the programs that work and offer real successes with very specific outcomes is very important. I also agree with comments earlier that there are some fundamental shortfalls like a transition plan to a homeless shelter, which I caught one of my folks doing not too long ago. You know,

it's just crazy. And there is a real need for support, and the States need to stand up for their responsibilities too.

But there is a need for some fundamental support while we are working on some of these other critical issues for these kids. And I don't want to lose sight as we talk about some of the good work I have heard today about some fundamental shortfalls, that a child has to have a place to stay and food, and just as we need to expect them, just as we do, I think, with many of our own kids about, you know, what are you doing to help the family along, while you transition to adult life.

We need to do that too, but we shouldn't shy away from the fact that there are some fundamental shortfalls I think that States are really struggling with, some doing a better job than others. But I think across the country—you have correctly identified some real issues that we need to address.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Garvey, UPS does this with a Casey grant. If we gave companies like yours a tax credit, would that be enough, or do we have to put money into private sector participation?

Mr. GARVEY. Well, I can't really answer that question directly. I can share a thought with you. And the thought is this. I think it is very similar to school-to-work and welfare-to-work. I don't think that folks, with all due respect, and please, I want it to be taken that way, folks from the public sector can go out to the private sector and sell a program. I think that there are so many programs that come beating on private industry's doors that they almost become numb to it.

However, when someone from private sector speaks to their counterpart within this private sector, another organization, their words have weight and meaning. Now, the perfect example is the welfare-to-work initiative going on throughout this country right now, and the welfare-to-work partnership where you have tens of thousands of employers engaged because other private-sector representatives have gone to them and solicited their help and showed them the benefits and the rewards for being involved in these types of activities.

So, I guess I skirted your question. Would tax credits do that? I don't know. I do know that the private sector is more likely to listen to their counterparts in the private sector when talking about these types of issues and engaging these types of issues.

And if I may there is one other point—

Mr. CARDIN. But on that point, let me just interrupt. Sometimes we get their attention because of the—it's not only good policy for the country, it makes good economic sense for the business, and, by the way, there are some incentives to move in this direction. We take away some of the risks.

So I think you are right. It's tough for us to get in the door to make the sale. You do a much better job at it. But we also have to provide the climate and the incentives to make it work.

Mr. GARVEY. Please pardon me. I was not discounting the thought at all. I was not answering the question because quite frankly I don't have an answer. I don't know.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. I mean one of the things we really need to think more about is how do we incentivize States to

get the business community involved, to get the much more flexible job training capability—those dollars involved. How do we get them to really look at HUD and HUD's programs, and our extraordinary capacity to develop affordable housing through the low-income housing tax credit. There is a lot of stuff out there. And there is a lot happening, but it actually isn't touching on this population. They don't get thought of to get into it.

And so I think some way of incentivizing States is necessary because the agencies that run these programs are really under a lot of pressure.

Mr. GARVEY. There is an inherent danger that we have seen with welfare-to-work and I'm sure you have seen it on a much broader scope than I have. This is an observation that when you apply tax credits as an incentive, it can draw undesirable types to the table also because there are folks that follow the dollar and economics of it.

And I guess if there were a fire wall to protect the children and the tax credits from that type of organization that is seeking just the tax credits and the sheer economics of it—

Mr. CARDIN. That is a very interesting point. And it may be that we ought to put the burden on the States to develop sort of a business group that we are doing that, and then there would be money freed up if they were able to do that because that is a really terrible thought.

Mr. YOUNG. I really think that one of the things, and we kind of have a bee in our bonnet in Vermont just because we have had some real success and that is a way of bringing all of the people, all of the players in the community to the table, is this business of combining both flexibility about funding with clear outcomes tied to local efforts, not even statewide efforts, but local efforts.

And we are developing outcomes across human services by school—we don't do it by counties, we do it by school supervisory unions—so that we can look at a whole host of outcomes. For example, for communities, and I think somewhere in this packet I have a booklet that we give to each supervisory union across a whole range of outcomes in human services, among them that, you know, youth transition to adulthood successfully. And some of those we have very clear, measures, and some we don't. But we find that when we can challenge local communities and tie it to some assistance, that they come up with plans that we would never think of that are much better than if I said, you know, as we used to do, here's this program and it has to look exactly like this in every one of my regional offices.

They think of things we would never think of, and they are invested because it is their plan. So I do think having—whatever we can do to encourage that kind of flexibility but tied to really clear outcomes, where there is a continuous process of assessing. "Are you achieving what we want to achieve?" It does engage local businesses and schools and faith communities and a whole host of folks who usually, well not usually, but often are at the table in helping us out. Any approach that—

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Certainly the study that looks at what we have done in welfare does demonstrate that those States that have been able to generate exactly that kind of attitude

toward welfare and involvement and so on are doing much better than the rest. So any thoughts you have would be welcome, and we look forward to working with any of you on how we can assure that flexibility and the accountability. But also, if we do this right, we have a chance actually to change foster care from a child dependence program, particularly from 14 to 18, to the kind of child development program that it really needs to be.

Were you pulling the microphone over?

Mr. PINTO. I just wanted to make one statement as someone who has spent the last 10 years making many, many trips to Washington to speak about independent living and the needs of older youth in foster care and more than likely getting a handshake and a 20-second meeting and being shown the door, other than Mrs. Johnson, who has given me ample time to get on my soapbox and speak about this. But as someone who has dedicated his professional life to older kids in foster care and independent living, I can't thank you enough for today. It was very exciting, it makes me extremely optimistic, and I really feel that finally we have some folks here that understand the issue, and understand the need of these kids. And we are talking about a segment of our population, adolescents as a whole, that is kind of viewed as dangerous rather than endangered.

And I think today was dialog to begin to change that notion, and I thank you very much.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Well, thank you all for your testimony, and we look forward to working with you.

[Whereupon, at 4:13 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

[Submissions for the record follow:]

Statement of Mark E. Courtney, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Today I am going to share with you some results from a study conducted by myself, Irving Piliavin, and Andrew Grogan-Kaylor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison of the experiences of foster youths who aged out of the Wisconsin foster care system in 1995 and 1996. I will also share with you our recommendations for improving government support for persons making the transition from the care of the state to independence.

Our study is following foster youth from before they left the system until three years after they exited. Thus far we have interviewed 141 of them once while they were in care and 113 of those, or about 80 percent, 12 to 18 months after they were discharged from the system. The youths had been in care at least 18 months, an average of over five years, and therefore we believe that the system had a clear responsibility to prepare them for independence. I will focus today on selected findings regarding the experiences of our respondents 12 to 18 months after they left care.

The youth were asked a number of questions about their preparation for independent living. We asked whether they had been trained in a number of areas specified in law and regulations. The average percentage of sample members reporting that they had been "trained" in a given area was 76 percent. However, far fewer had actually been provided concrete assistance in carrying out essential tasks associated with independent living. For example, fewer than one fifth had received any job training, participated in a mock job interview, been told how to apply for public assistance, received help finding a job, or help obtaining housing, personal health records, or health insurance. Not surprisingly, over one-quarter of the former foster youth felt either not at all, or not very well prepared in a number of important areas including getting a job, managing money, obtaining housing, knowledge of community resources, parenting, and living on one's own.

Almost a third of the youths were at or below an eighth grade reading level when we first contacted them. Not surprisingly, given their educational deficits, by 12 to 18 months past discharge 37 percent of the young adults had not yet completed high school, 55 percent had completed high school, and only 9 percent had entered college.

The former foster youths had significant unmet health and mental health needs. Forty-four percent of them reported having trouble obtaining medical care most or all of the time. Of these, 90 percent reported that this was due to a lack of health insurance coverage or care costing too much. Nearly half of our respondents had received mental health services in the year prior to our interview with them while they were in out-of-home care. Nevertheless, in spite of no change in their overall mental health status, only about one-fifth had received any mental health services in the year prior to our second interview, after they had left care.

Achieving self sufficiency was difficult for a large percentage of the former foster youth. Fewer than half had at least \$250 when they were discharged from the system. Only three-fifths were working when we interviewed them 12 to 18 months after discharge. Even those employed earned on average slightly less than a full-time minimum wage worker. All told, 44 percent of the group had either been homeless, incarcerated, or received public assistance since leaving the care of the state.

What do we believe should be done. First, the unmet health and mental health needs of youth aging out of foster care are considerable. Common sense calls for extension of Medicaid eligibility to these youth through the age of twenty-one. Second, additional funding should be made available for concrete assistance to youth making the transition to independence. Currently, most services focus on education about independent living skills while providing limited if any "hands-on" experiences for youth. What is lacking are adequate opportunities for former foster youth to return to the system for help when that help is most needed and appreciated. This would include various kinds of concrete assistance in dealing with obstacles to self sufficiency and, perhaps most importantly, transitional housing. We believe that extension of the Title IV-E entitlement to twenty-one would be the easiest way to accomplish this. Moreover, our research suggests that the cost of doing so would not be as much as might be expected since former foster youth who are reasonably self sufficient would not take advantage of the entitlement. At a minimum, substantial targeted funding should be made available to develop and evaluate such programs. Third, funding regulations should be changed to require independent living programs to help youth to maximize the potential, and minimize the harm, of their relationships with their families of origin. One-third of our respondents lived with kin after leaving the care of the system and most maintain significant contact with their families. Social support appears to be the best predictor of self sufficiency for these young adults, a much better predictor than the amount of independent living training they received. It is time to stop pretending that foster youth do not have families. Lastly, current and future independent and transitional living programs must be subjected to much more thorough outcome evaluation. Our nation has spent over one billion dollars on these programs over the past decade while learning almost nothing about what works for whom.

Statement of Sister Mary Rose McGeady, D.C., President, Covenant House

INTRODUCTION

Covenant House is very pleased that the President and the Congress have placed the issue of aging-out foster care youth on the national agenda. We would like to thank Congresswoman Nancy L. Johnson for taking the leadership on this matter by holding hearings on this very important issue.

This hearing presents us with the opportunity to have a long overdue dialogue about a segment of our population that is often overlooked in many of our social programs, namely young adults between the ages of 18 and 21. There will be volumes of information presented to this Subcommittee on the challenges facing older youth leaving foster care. We would like to offer the Committee a description of our Rights of Passage program as a model for meeting some of the challenges facing this population.

In the United States today, we often think of a person who is 18 years old as an adult. At 18, a young person has the right to vote, to defend our country in wartime and is expected to make critical decisions about his/her life. As parents we might give our children more responsibility at 18 than we would at 16 because we want them to begin to behave more adult-like. In fact, many of our federal, state, and local social programs for children and youth often end when a young person reaches the age of 18 because we expect that, at this age, an individual should be able to adequately provide for him/herself. But we also know that under "normal" circumstances, children at this age struggle to meet these expectations, even with the assistance of a loving, caring, and supportive family environment. These children

still rely on their parents for guidance and financial support as well as their network of friends and colleagues to assist along the way. In fact, many middle class parents would agree that their children do not really begin to approach adulthood until they graduate from college, obtain their first “real” job and find their own housing, which might not happen until age 25.

But what about young people who do not have this kind of support system? How do they successfully make the transition from adolescence to adulthood? How does the homeless youth, the youth who has been orphaned by AIDS or substance abuse, and the youth leaving the supportive environment of foster care begin to create a life for him/herself? Almost thirteen years ago Covenant House pondered these questions. We realized that we had to create a support system for these young people to help them become productive adults. Consequently, we established and implemented one of our most successful programs for homeless and at-risk emancipated youth, our Rights of Passage (ROP) transitional living program. We believe—and our experience has proven—that this program encompasses the components necessary to successfully move emancipated youth into adulthood. These important components include access to housing, vocational training and jobs, educational programs, access to daycare, access to medical care, and most importantly, access to caring, supportive individuals such as program staff and mentors.

Covenant House is the country’s largest privately funded childcare agency providing services to homeless, runaway, and at risk youth in 14 cities across the nation. Last year our programs provided food, shelter, clothing, counseling, medical, educational, and vocational services to over 41,000 youth in our residential programs, community service centers, and van outreach programs in the United States. Sixty-five percent of the youth we serve at Covenant House are between the ages of 18 and 21. About 40 percent of these young people have been in foster care. Many of them are estranged from their families while others have no families at all. Consequently, they often become residents in transitional living programs like Rights of Passage. The Covenant House ROP program serves as a model that we believe can transform the lives of young people so that they become independent, self-sufficient adults.

CASE HISTORIES

After Ohio Children’s Services removed him from an abusive home, George spent his adolescence in a foster home with a loving and supportive foster mother. Although she would have been glad to allow him to continue living with her when he turned 18, he had to leave because there were younger foster children in the home. George had dropped out of school but was working. His job, however, did not provide enough money for him to maintain an apartment, so he decided to join the crew of a carnival that traveled around the country. After several months, George came to Florida with the carnival and decided he did not want to continue that tough, wandering life. He called the Nineline (1-800-999-9999), Covenant House’s national hotline for youth and families, and was referred to Covenant House Florida in Ft. Lauderdale. He spent several months at our Crisis Center, where he obtained his GED and completed several components of our ROP program that prepares older adolescents for the world of work.

David lived in foster care in New York City from age 11 to 18. At 19 he moved to South Carolina to live with his grandfather, but this arrangement did not last long. During his stay with his grandfather, David got a job and soon after moved into an apartment of his own. Six months later, David was laid off from his job, was unable to pay his rent, and lost his apartment. He turned to his family for help to no avail. Finally, an uncle living in New York City agreed to help David and he returned to New York. This living arrangement did not last long because David was having difficulty finding a job and was asked to leave his uncle’s house. David came to our Crisis Center because he did not have a place to stay. He worked with the job developers at Covenant House and was employed within a month. He moved into ROP and is currently employed at Staples earning \$6.50 per hour. He has been at ROP for six months and we believe he will be ready to move into his own apartment in another six months.

Dionne entered the California foster care system at age 13. Following placement in several different group homes, she came to Covenant House California when she aged out of the system. After several attempts, she successfully entered the Right of Passage program, completed all three phases of the life skills curriculum, and graduated into a supportive apartment. Dionne is currently employed full-time at another social service agency in Los Angeles. She also volunteers at Covenant House as a peer counselor on the outreach van. One of her goals is to attend college to

study early childhood development so that she can help others who have come through the foster care system.

John is a 20-year-old male who initially came to Covenant House Washington (CHW) at the age of 18 seeking assistance to obtain a GED. After being in the District of Columbia foster care system from the age of 12 to the age of 18, John decided that he no longer wanted to receive foster care services because he did not like the restrictions the system placed upon him. During that time he was in four separate foster homes. In his last two placements, he was separated from his biological brother and sister. Initially, John bounced from place to place and sometimes lived on the streets. His attendance at CHW was sporadic and his behavior ranged from cooperative and studious to disruptive and inattentive. With the continued encouragement of CHW staff, John has moved into shelter where he is living presently. In the meantime, CHW is assisting John with counseling, meals, GED studies, employment, and emotional support.

Mary is a young woman from our program at Covenant House New Orleans. She entered the foster care system and was placed with a number of families, some good and some bad. Finally, she was placed in a group home setting where she remained until age 18. As she states in her own words:

I left with good behavior, but it hurt because once again I was leaving a home. So then I started running away too scared to get close to anyone and afraid to let anyone help and it messed me up. I was leaving good and bad places, having nothing, no one and no place to go, sleeping outside or anywhere I lay my head. Being in the custody of the State was hard for me all the way even though it bettered me in so many ways. I had people to love and care for me. It gave me the opportunity to go to school and become somebody. If I were with my parents I would not be who I am today. Though it hurt me to get taken away from my family, it saved my life from failure.

What happened to me was painful but people go through worse. The pain and troubles don't stop at age 18. The State needs to expand the after care program into programs like this one [Covenant House]. When you get out of States Custody you shouldn't have to fall homeless and then get help because some people fall and don't get up. It should already be set before we make 18 to go to a transitional program. When I left States Custody I had to fall homeless and get back up. It's like after 18 you're on your own and life is going to fall into place. That's not how it always works. At the age of 18 life gets harder and you have to deal with it alone. Transitional programs should be there for the extra schooling, work, or parenting classes—the structure, guidance, and discipline that teens need.”

These stories are representative of many young people who come to our Covenant House sites. Some are running away from abusive or neglectful situations; some have been thrown out of their homes due to pregnancy, unemployment, or incarceration, and some are escaping domestic violence and substance abusing parents. Many of these young people have tried to make it on their own, but were unsuccessful. For many of these youth, Covenant House is their last chance.

RIGHTS OF PASSAGE

The Rights of Passage (ROP) program began 13 years ago at our New York site as a response to the increasing numbers of youth we were seeing who had no place to call home and who were having a difficult time making it on their own. Covenant House currently operates eight ROP programs across the country. ROP is a long-term transitional living program which provides a unique opportunity for homeless young men and women, aged 18 to 21, who are motivated to take control of their future. It offers a safe and stable living environment, where young people are able to focus on pursuing their educational and vocational goals and prepare for the responsibilities of adulthood. ROP is a unique collaboration of a broad range of individuals, from staff and volunteers to mentors and private sector business people, working together to help our youth approach their long term goal of independent living.

Our primary objective in ROP is to help youth adjust to the world of work. However, daily living in the program presents each young person with a variety of challenges including interaction with peers, management of time and money, negotiating social systems, learning responsibility to self and others, setting priorities, and focusing on realistic goals. ROP is a community of people working together to foster growth through positive relationships. Staff and youth share meals, recreational activities, and other aspects of daily living. They also hold special activities such as

group meetings, workshops, retreats, camping trips, and other excursions. In many ways ROP can be seen as a school for positive independent living. Participants are presented with the opportunity to learn through counseling, daily interaction with staff and peers, facing challenges, and accepting and correcting mistakes.

ROP operates on the premise that stable employment is the key to true independence. To this end the program has three major components to assist our young people overcome barriers to gainful employment. They include a vocational/job placement program, an educational program, and a mentor program.

VOCATIONAL/JOB PLACEMENT

The Vocational Training Program provides job-specific training, educational support, and direct placement upon the successful completion of the training. Course areas include building maintenance, office assistant, business technology, culinary arts, desktop publishing, home health aide, medical receptionist, metal and marble restoration, nurses aide, landscaping, and silk screen printing. All training programs are joint ventures with private sector businesses, and are taught by in-house staff and volunteer professionals from each industry. ROP staff also refer participants to training programs offered by other providers in the community when appropriate.

We are constantly seeking varied opportunities for youth to gain access to employment. Ezekiel's Cafe is an earned income project managed by our Covenant House New York site, which employs our young people directly. The cafe offers a creative approach to preparing our young men and women for the job market. Two new earned income projects, desktop publishing and silk screen printing, are currently being developed and implemented. At Covenant House New Orleans, White Dove is another such project which trains our youth for jobs in landscaping. White Dove has secured contracts to care for areas as diverse as community gardens to sections of the city's highway.

Job Placement Services develop employment opportunities for young adults. Clients meet with counselors, attend vocational workshops, prepare resumes, and take assessment tests to determine their skill and academic level. Our job development staff initially work to secure entry-level jobs from private sector partners. In New York City, for example, the Covenant House job bank has grown to over 655 companies that employ our youth in a wide range of industries from banks to building maintenance. We cannot overestimate the importance of getting private businesses involved in any endeavor designed to help youth transition to adulthood. Youth need an economic base from which to build in order to reach independence, and employment is the key to that base.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The Educational Program, sometimes directly and mostly through collaboration with other agencies, provides day and evening classes, volunteer tutors, and computer-assisted study programs to offer courses that include Adult Basic Education, English as Second Language classes, General Education Diploma preparation, and assistance to students in accessing higher education. At Covenant House we understand that as our young adults improve their educational skills, they also increase their chances of getting a higher paying job which takes them closer to permanent housing and independence.

MENTOR PROGRAM

The Mentor Program matches each resident to one of a select group of professional men and women who have volunteered to act as advisors and role models for these young people. For many of our young people it is the first time in their lives that they will experience a supportive, one-to-one relationship with an adult. Our mentors play an important role in providing our youth with employment and career advice. Mentors are an integral part of Rights of Passage. Our graduates consistently rate mentors as a key factor contributing to their success.

OTHER ESSENTIAL SERVICES

In addition to the three major areas of ROP outlined above, ROP residents also have access to other services that are essential to their success while in the program. They are able to have their health care needs met directly through our free clinics and through collaborations with local hospitals. Upon leaving ROP, however, many young people find themselves without access to medical services. They sometimes do not have jobs that offer them medical benefits and often do not qualify for

Medicaid or other state run health programs because of their age or income. Unfortunately, these young people then become part of the large population of uninsured working families in America. We fully support the President's proposal to extend Medicaid benefits to this age group and hope the Congress will join us.

Young women with children make up about 30 percent of our ROP residents. They are some of our most motivated and responsible ROP participants. They tend to be more focused and driven to accomplish their goals. While the mothers reside at ROP, they have access to safe affordable daycare for their children. We encourage all our mothers to apply for subsidized daycare upon entering our program so they will have it upon graduation. However, far too many of them do not get daycare because there are not enough slots available. This situation has been worsened by the competition between working mothers and mothers on welfare who have been given priority for daycare slots. Consequently, some of our young mothers are unable to fulfill their job commitments because they have no stable daycare arrangements and as a result of increased absenteeism, become unemployed. With no income, they lose their apartments. Some of these young women end up on welfare in order to survive. We need to increase funding to the Childcare Block Grant to States in order to expand daycare opportunities. This will prevent many young women from having to choose welfare over work.

One of the most important aspects of our program is helping our youth find a permanent home of their own. Access to affordable housing is one of the biggest challenges facing our young people leaving the ROP program. Many of our sites have apartment programs to assist our young people with housing. We also seek collaborations with low-income housing providers in order to secure affordable housing for our youth. More opportunities must be created so that young people can gain access to affordable housing.

CONCLUSION

Over 60 percent of ROP participants graduate to independent living. This means that after they leave the program they continue to be employed and are living in a stable environment. While we are proud of this success rate, naturally we continue to search for ways to improve. We are also very cognizant that we cannot do this work alone as evidenced by the public and private partnerships and collaborations outlined earlier.

The most important challenge that we face in helping young people make the transition to adulthood is the lack of adequate programs like ours available to assist them. Covenant House operates eight transitional living programs across the country with an average daily census of 296, and still we have long waiting lists. Clearly, there is a need for more programs for our young people to help them successfully transition to adulthood. We hope that the Congress will increase the funding to provide much needed programs like these for aging-out foster care youth.

Statement of Louis H. Henderson, President, National Association of Former Foster Care Children of America

My name is Louis H. Henderson. I am the President of the National Association of Former Foster Care Children of America. NAFFCCA is a nonprofit organization that manages services for the Children and Family Service Agency. The services offered by NAFFCCA cover the scope of providing housing through its *Independent Living Program* which obtain housing in various apartment complexes within the community for young foster care individuals between the ages of 17-21 years old who are in the custody of CFSA.

Today I bring before this committee my personal story, and a thorough understanding of the foster care industry and specific recommendations for how the system and the foster care service delivery model should change. This testimony is presented for the purpose of enhancing the credibility for the need to support changes in a system which has for too long not benefitted from refreshing paradigms truly designed for real impact.

I entered the foster care system at the age of two (2) and for sixteen (16) years I was treated to what seemed like an endless series of insensitive moves from home to home, foster parent to foster parent, and from one unstable condition to another. Throughout this ordeal of being sent, assigned, and moved, the most unfortunate reality was that at no time was any attention paid or any inquiry made relative to my personal wants, dreams or desires. The system designed to advocate for me was most to blame for making me feel like an economic clog in the government-

backed wheel. Fundamentally what the system lacks is a focus on the personal outcomes of the individual.

The totality of this sixteen-year ordeal represents a blur of frustrations largely associated with the loss of my personhood, dignity, and my conviction that adults with influence could and would really work for and with my best interest. The fundamental breakdown was the loss of trust in anything other than what I knew I would do for myself. It is my hope that whatever comes from this hearing will support the restoration of trust that foster children have in adults with power.

What we do with our past experiences either supports or debilitates our future potential to make a contribution that supports our own lives and the lives of others.

I've made a personal life commitment to supporting real change in the foster care system. Clearly this industry faces many challenges. It is my opinion that two critical changes must be a part of the national solution. I make these recommendations with the affirming benefit of dialogue with influential and experienced city leaders, with a close examination of the research and with the perspective of my first-hand experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- That *local block grants be expanded* that will support local efforts deigned around local partnerships including corporations, universities, business working with social services agencies, and that each initiative has an evaluation component.
- That each new initiative has the policy support that incorporates clear lines of *accountability that ties dollars to outcomes* determined by an action-research assessment of whether or not the foster child services were designed and did in fact have a successful impact.

NAFFCCA believes that theory and practice must be the operating model for any new change design. It is for that reason that the National Association of Former Foster Care Children of America has joined with the Lt. Joseph P. Kennedy Institute of Washington, D.C. and the Ed-Tech Educational Corporation to implement a new model of one stop shopping which provides each fosters care child with a complete continuum of services from independent living to education, to the evaluation of the individual's personal outcomes for success. It is important to note that this model is currently meeting with great success in significantly increasing the number of people and resources to support the objectives of the foster care system. With this new model this local area (District of Columbia) now, clearly has more people working on problem-solving.

Additionally the National Association of Former Foster Care Children of America's mission has found a supportive *meeting of mission* with the Points of Light Foundation. This powerful organization has generously inserted its willing spirit and proven track record toward supporting the foster care cause. Their support for our goals should not go unrecognized as an exemplary model of what can happen when organizations join together to wrestle a social problem that has historically been approached in isolation. The Points of Light Foundation with it's spirited and devoted national leadership has modeled for us the positive outcome of what happens when partnerships and mergers are formed to advance the lives of children. This union of support is already showing great promise for replication (ability) with applications in other urban and rural communities. The merits and success of these two partnerships working to support NAFFCCA have given the nation a big push forward in our pursuit of knowing and implementing what really works.

Statement of National Network for Youth

BACKGROUND

The National Network for Youth is a 24-year-old privately supported, non-profit membership organization committed to advancing its mission to ensure that young people can be safe and grow up to lead healthy and productive lives. Through its relationship with 10 regional networks across the country, the National Network represents over 1,500 constituents, primarily community-based youth-serving agencies located in all fifty states. The majority of our members work with runaway and homeless youth through a comprehensive array of programs including temporary emergency shelters, long-term transitional living services and street outreach programs.

As the Subcommittee on Human Resources considers testimony and policy recommendations regarding the challenges confronting older children leaving foster

care and the expansion of the Independent Living Program, the National Network for Youth would like to highlight, as a model for this expansion, the Transitional Living Program. For over a decade the Transitional Living Program has served as a bridge for homeless young people by assisting them to successfully transition to adulthood.

THE TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAM

Funding and Administration

The Transitional Living Program is one of three programs funded by the federal government through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. In fiscal year 1999, \$14.949 million was appropriated for the Transitional Living Program. The President's budget for fiscal year 2000 provides \$20 million for the Transitional Living Program, an increase of \$5 million. The Program is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Family and Youth Services Bureau, which allocates funding through a competitive grant process to community-based organizations serving homeless youth. Funding priority is given to organizations that have experience working with runaway and homeless youth and an in-depth understanding of the issues that confront them. In 1998, seventy-eight programs across the country were funded through the Transitional Living Program.

Overview of the Transitional Living Program

Most young people learn the skills necessary for successful transition into adulthood by caring parents, guardians, other family members and through school. However, a large number of youth who are homeless in this country do not have caring adults in their lives to help them learn these skills and, oftentimes, they are disconnected from schools. Often, these young people experience tremendous hardship in their ability to secure stable housing, educational opportunities and employment and, as a result, are confronted with an increased risk of long-term homelessness, physical or mental illness, dependency on welfare and other difficult challenges.

The main goal of the Transitional Living Program is to guide, encourage and assist runaway and homeless youth to successfully transition to self-sufficient adulthood. The Transitional Living Program provides homeless youth, ages 16 to 21, with long-term shelter, a structured environment and other services designed to promote transition to self-sufficiency and "to prevent long-term dependency on social services." The young people who receive services from Transitional Living Programs are not able to live with their families because of safety concerns and they have no other safe living arrangements. In addition, the Transitional Living Program often serves as a safety net for young people who either age out of, or who do not qualify for services in the Child Welfare System. The Program also works with system youth who have been shuffled from one foster home to another and eventually run away from such unstable care. In short, these young people are disconnected from their families, schools, communities and other systems.

In Transitional Living Programs, young people learn basic life skills such as money management, budgeting, consumer education and responsible use of credit. In addition, Transitional Living Programs promote educational advancement, teach young people to become proficient in securing and maintaining meaningful employment, and connect young people to opportunities and supports available in their communities.

In order to participate in a Transitional Living Program, a young person must maintain employment and/or be enrolled in school—high school, community college, university, vocational training or a GED program. Program participants are also responsible for paying rent, maintaining a savings account, contributing to household chores and activities, setting both immediate and long-term goals and working to achieve those goals.

A guiding principle in providing services through the Transitional Living Programs is Youth Development. Youth Development is an approach to working with young people that connects them to supports and opportunities within their communities and actually involves them in decision-making and leadership roles. By involving young people in this way, they become more invested in what they learn, more committed to attaining their goals and, in the process, develop valuable leadership skills and experience. These skills and experiences are instrumental in a young person's ability to become self-sufficient, to develop positive family and social relationships and to become a productive, contributing member of his/her community.

The Effectiveness of Transitional Living Programs

A recent study conducted by Covenant House New Jersey demonstrated that Transitional Living Programs are effective in assisting young people to transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency.¹ In a survey of all seventy-eight federally funded Transitional Living Programs conducted from November 1, 1998 to January 8, 1999, Covenant House New Jersey found:

1. Programs reported that, as of the date of their responses, 78 percent of young people in Transitional Living Programs were employed; most of these youth were employed full-time.

2. Sixty-five percent of Transitional Living Programs residents attended school.

3. Eighty-five percent of Transitional Living Program residents did not receive any direct government subsidies, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Medicaid.

4. Remarkably, of the programs which reported on outcomes, 74 percent of residents were discharged to stable housing. These same programs reported that 78 percent of TLP graduates remained free of all direct government aid six months after discharge.

In another comprehensive evaluation of Transitional Living Programs conducted by CSR, Incorporated under contract to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, the author concluded that youth who participated in the Program were faring better than their non-TLP counterparts.² According to the study, after six months of program participation, the overall positive outcomes of the evaluation were:

- More participant youth said their health had improved;
- More participant youth had savings;
- More participant youth were employed;
- Fewer participant youth were dropouts;
- More participant youth were in college;
- More participant youth were both employed and attending school.

The Real-Life Experiences of Youth Served by the Transitional Living Program

"I was born and raised in Chicago. My mom has a drug problem and my dad is an alcoholic. They separated when I was little. I lived with my mom, my aunt and her four children. One day my mom left. I didn't know where she was. Soon, things didn't work out with my aunt, so I left and lived on the streets. I stayed in school the whole time. I didn't tell my teachers or friends about this, but I wrote a poem about homelessness. One of my teachers read it and said I had to know first-hand from what I'd written. I was referred to Teen Living Programs [funded through the federal Transitional Living Program.] I am proud that I graduated from high school and the TLP. Now I'm working full-time, have an apartment, and I'm going back to college."—Kim, age 26

"Two years ago, I was homeless. I was in and out of foster homes until I was 16, when the state took me away for good from my mom and my stepfather, because of physical and emotional abuse. I had a foster family for two years, but I had to leave when I turned 18. I tried technical college, but that didn't work out. I tried to join the Army, but I didn't get in. I had no money and no place to go. I stayed for a while with my last foster family and they helped me find the Transitional Living Program at the Youth Services Bureau, in Montpelier, Vermont. Now, I have my own apartment and I'm in college part-time. I'm going full-time this August." Stacie, age 20.

CONCLUSION

For over a decade the Transitional Living Program has effectively served as a bridge for homeless young people as they transition from adolescence and adulthood by providing not only safe shelter, but access to critical opportunities and supports such as education and employment. Many young people who have graduated from the program are self-sufficient, active members of their communities which points to the success of the Program. We strongly believe that the Transitional Living Program can serve as a model as you work to expand the Independent Living Program.

If you would like further information about Transitional Living Programs around the country or if you have any questions about this written testimony, please do not hesitate to call.

¹ Covenant House New Jersey. 1999. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Law Project. New Jersey: Author.

² Department of Health and Human Services. 1997. Evaluation of the Transitional Living Programs for Homeless Youth. Washington, D.C.: CSR, Incorporated.

NEW PATHWAYS, INC.
BALTIMORE, MD 21212
March 8, 1999

The Honorable Nancy Johnson
2113 Rayburn H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Support for H.R. 671

Dear Madame Chair,

I am writing this testimony in support of H.R. 671 as a representative of New Pathways, Inc., a private non-profit agency in Baltimore, MD. Our agency provides independent living services to transition-aged youth in the foster care system, who are between the ages of 17 and 21. These youth have typically been in the foster care system for the majority of their lives due to some degree of abuse, neglect and/or abandonment by their biological families. We provide housing, case management services, job training and support, as well as independence skills training for 50 clients in our Independence Plus program, and for 6 young mothers and their babies in our Second Generations Program.

We are lucky in Maryland that our State has made a financial commitment to these transition-aged foster care youth who are making efforts to better themselves in spite of their difficult histories, whether it be through continued higher education or work experience. As long as a continued effort is made, the foster care system supports these individuals up to the age of 21. I have personally witnessed many achievements by these young adults after leaving our program, maintaining successful careers and relationships, and some even having saved enough money to purchase a home. These are areas in which these same individuals would likely not have been successful if they had no support during these challenging years.

The most important point I feel that I can make is that these young adults are much more similar than they are different from kids growing up with their biological families. I believe that most parents would agree that their 18-year-old kids are not completely ready for the "real" world, and even if they are living on their own, are not truly independent from their parents until they are in their twenties. It is unrealistic to expect 18-year-old foster children, who have grown up with little or no family support, to be independent when the majority of middle class children rely to some degree on their families well into their twenties.

The Foster Care System is the closest thing that many of these children have to an extended family, and it is the responsibility of the System to assist in the process of transitioning to adulthood, rather than cut off any assistance at the age of 18. By doing this, it would greatly reduce the risk of these foster kids being reliant on the System as an adult.

Mr. Cardin should be commended for introducing legislation that takes such a proactive, prevention-minded approach to meeting a very important need within our society. I fully support this legislation and strongly urge that this legislation be passed.

I would be happy to talk to or meet with any legislators or their staff who may be interested in seeing first hand, how an independent living program such as New Pathways can truly impact the lives of these young adults.

Respectfully,

KEVIN M. KEEGAN
Executive Director

Statement of Eileen McCaffrey, Executive Director, Orphan Foundation of America, Vienna, Virginia

My name is Eileen McCaffrey, I have been the Executive Director of the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) since 1991. OFA was founded in 1981 by a man who spent 18 years in foster care and knew too well the loneliness and challenges youth face when they "age out" of the foster care system at age 18 or with high school graduation.

OFA's mission is to improve the quality of life for older foster youth by assisting them to become productive, self-reliant adults. This is achieved through the provision of post secondary scholarships and low interest loans, teen leadership training, sponsoring youth community service projects, support and encouragement through volunteer mentors and scholarship sponsors, and advocacy and public education programs. OFA is the only national scholarship program serving foster and former foster youth attending college and vocational school.

Since 1991, OFA has awarded nearly \$700,000 to 1053 students in 39 states. To date it has received no federal or state funds and is primarily a volunteer organization. Through our scholarship application process we have learned a great deal about the foster teens hopes, dreams and promise as well the obstacles they have overcome and the challenges they face transitioning to adulthood.

OFA wholeheartedly supports increasing the Title IV-E budget to expand and improve Independent Living Programs (ILP) nationwide and services to runaway and homeless youth programs. However, we hope that rather than just appropriating money, a national dialogue can begin focusing on how communities will raise foster children and provide the necessary resources so they can become contributing members of the community.

The bleak statistics show that too many foster teens fall through the cracks, nearly 50% do not graduate from high school and at some point, more than 40% will be homeless. Systemic change is necessary to help the 25,000 foster teens who reach the age of majority or emancipation annually. The goal of every single person involved in the foster youth's life should be to help him or her prepare for a productive and successful adulthood.

Independent Living Programs must be seen as a continuum of care that works in tandem with the foster family or group care provider, social workers, a volunteer mentor or adult friend, and an employer or community service agency. All licensed Social Service Agencies and foster parents must be taught how to provide youth with age appropriate Independent Living preparation.

Because ILP programs differ greatly in the scope of services provided as well as the population served it is not possible to generalize and dictate a precise format for success. Some programs offer comprehensive support services while other simply offer workshops. Keys For Life, the Washington, D.C. ILP program has a job bank that actually places youth in paid and unpaid positions, it pays for college tuition and related expenses including books, travel and fees. The ILP coordinator in Colorado logs hundreds of miles weekly visiting her youth in their rural homes. The specifics of what a program can and should provide varies greatly depending on their geographic location, amount of federal and state funds available, number of eligible youth participating and the specific needs of the population.

Despite the differences in programs, I believe all ILP programs must be more individualized and participatory by engaging youth with mentors, local employers, civic, church and community resources. Well-designed and fully funded programs managed by trained staff are the least we should provide our parentless youth, but I do not think that is enough. In addition to helping teens learn specific and tangible skills associated with independence, ILP programs must position themselves to be a bridge between foster youth and the community.

Foster teens need relationships with adults who represent life beyond the "system." Similar to a child not listening to his or her parents, many foster teens reach an age where the more traditional format of a social service worker or agencies conducting a workshop has little impact. For too many youth ILP classes are abstract or too basic. "The packet of worksheets they gave me was simple, and I already know how to wash my clothes and car, so I just didn't do it. I thought my homework was more important." said 20-year old Jenna from Pennsylvania. ILP programs must reach into the community for donations of time and expertise. Local bankers can teach money management classes, parents of college age students can help foster teens with the college application process, a local chef can talk about food preparation and culinary arts as a profession, and job fairs can be organized by a local civic or church organization. Real life experience must augment materials developed by ILP specialists and for-profit publishers.

Additionally, ILP programs should access existing resources in the community and partner up with other non-profit organizations. Not only does this maximize resources and program effectiveness but it would also engage others in the lives of foster teens and give program participants numerous adult role models to emulate. Despite limited budgets, ILP programs can provide an innovative and dynamic program by involving volunteers and existing community resources.

Consistently, youth say ILP programs should assess their participants' Independent Living (IL) readiness level in an effort to serve their needs rather than teach a curriculum carved in stone. Jason Fiorilla aged out of the Utah State foster care

system in 1993, he received an undergraduate degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and will graduate from Stanford Law School in May 1999, he wrote "In particular, my ILP counseling was nothing more than a basic living course which re-educated seemingly intelligent individuals on the rudimentary processes of daily life. Washing clothes, opening a bank account, shopping for groceries, and other essential, albeit obvious details were trumpeted as difficult barriers which could only be overcome through understanding and much repetition. Although these concerns are vital, they could all be covered in about 10 minutes, far shy of the 6-week course presented in my home state. What about standardized tests, AP courses, college financing, the admissions process? These topics were not even broached by my counselor. They had already determined that none of us were college bound anyway, and consequently ruled it out as a subject meriting attention. Indeed, nearly every class began and ended with the familiar phrase, 'Graduating high school is all we ask.'"

Consistently, foster teens tell OFA the expectations placed on them are too low. Jason Fiorillo believes "Although the individuals running the Utah State IL program seemed to be generally good intentioned, they lacked the ability to cognize and implement long term planning strategies with foster youth. Rather than focusing on graduation from high school as a step which facilitates the transition to adulthood, they presented it as an end in and of itself. In the myopic view of the ILP counselors, high school graduation was the final goal, the mark of success for a foster youth. While it is very true that High School graduation is very important, and often difficult for many youth (foster and otherwise) in helping an adolescent prepare for the future one should not cease planning upon the receipt of a diploma."

Stephanie McDonald a freshman at Univ. of Connecticut said "my ILP program took us to museums, plays and the movies but never talked to us about college or any other sort of training." OFA does not believe that college is the appropriate goal for every foster youth. Some wish to join the work world as soon as possible and need to be directed to jobs and companies with growth potential that pay a living wage with benefits. Other are interested in a trade program and could be encouraged to join the federally funded Job Corp Program to learn the trade at no cost, while others can attend a vocational school or community college. The whole of the foster care system must work with ILP programs to become much more outcome focused. All foster teens need help developing hard skills as well as soft social skills and each must be engaged in the process of clarifying goals and establishing a realistic life plan.

Homelessness is a problem facing former foster teens. Many leave the system with no place to go and end up on the streets after months of bouncing from pillar to post. ILP programs should be given resources to prevent the cycle of homelessness that can begin within the first year of independence. Federal and state agencies such as HUD should issue Section-8 housing vouchers (or enrollment in an appropriate housing program) to ILP programs nationwide. The ILP program could then place youth in this housing as a transitional step for 1-2 years. Hundreds of youth could be cycled through these housing arrangements. This would allow youth to implement ILP skills such as budgeting, housekeeping, and keeping a job or completing a training program while in safe and affordable housing. By placing the voucher in the ILP program's name rather than granting it to individuals, public housing will remain a short-term transitional step for 18-21 year old foster youth.

Additional components of a good independent living program might include a community service project and internships or job shadowing with local businesses. Youth who volunteer have greater self-esteem and have a sense of empowerment; rather than being on the receiving end many foster teens want to give back to society. Internships would expand a youth's vision of the work world and might inspire them to set higher goals in a newly introduced career field. All efforts must cumulate with helping the teen paint a realistic picture of what their life can be, complete with milestones, options and consequences.

Annually OFA receives hundreds of applications from foster teens nationwide who want an education or training beyond high school. Most realize that by preparing for the competitive work world of the twenty-first century they can to break the cycle of homelessness, underachievement, violence and poverty that made them wards of the state. Many of them can and do succeed while others fail for lack of a support system. Every foster youth should have access to resources that address their specific needs and highlight their talents. Like a parent, the foster care system and its many components must recognize the promise and potential of each youth and commit itself to helping them all achieve independence and a successful transition to adulthood.