

119TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

S. 4634

To amend section 477 of the Social Security Act to update the purposes of the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood to reflect research and the input of youth with lived experience regarding the importance of long-term relationships to future success.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 21, 2026

Mr. HUSTED introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance

A BILL

To amend section 477 of the Social Security Act to update the purposes of the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood to reflect research and the input of youth with lived experience regarding the importance of long-term relationships to future success.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Chafee Opportunities
5 for New Networks and Existing Connection Trust Act”
6 or the “CONNECT Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. UPDATING THE PURPOSES OF THE JOHN H.**
2 **CHAFEE FOSTER CARE PROGRAM FOR SUC-**
3 **CESSFUL TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD.**

4 (a) UPDATING OF PURPOSES.—Section 477(a) of the
5 Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 677(a)) is amended—

6 (1) by striking paragraph (2);

7 (2) by redesignating paragraphs (1) and (3)
8 through (7) as paragraphs (3) through (8), respec-
9 tively; and

10 (3) by inserting after “conducted—” the fol-
11 lowing:

12 “(1) to help children who have experienced fose-
13 ter care at age 14 or older to develop and maintain
14 sustained, supportive relationships with adults (in-
15 cluding kin or fictive kin who are not serving as
16 placement), mentors, and peers (including peers who
17 have experienced foster care), with a goal of pro-
18 viding multiple and varied paths to reduce isolation
19 and ensuring that the youth develop lifelong connec-
20 tions and support networks; and

21 “(2) to support youth still in foster care who
22 have experienced foster care at age 14 or older in
23 exercising the rights referred to in section 475A to
24 participate in developing their permanency plan and
25 receive written information about available services
26 and steps the agency is taking to support the plan,

1 as well as to facilitate pre- and post-permanency
2 peer support, mentoring, connections with kin, and
3 referrals to additional appropriate programs and
4 services to help youth achieve their permanency
5 goals;”.

6 (b) GUIDANCE.—Not later than 1 year after the date
7 of the enactment of this Act and after consulting with
8 youth with lived experience in foster care, the Secretary
9 of Health and Human Services shall issue guidance to
10 States and Tribal child welfare agencies regarding the
11 purposes set forth in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section
12 477(a) of the Social Security Act, that includes, at a min-
13 imum—

14 (1) examples of services and support eligible for
15 Federal funding under part B of title IV of such
16 Act, under part E of such title as part of completing
17 and following the case plan requirements provided
18 for in section 475A of such Act, or under section
19 477 of such Act, including individual youth support,
20 family support, and peer support to engage youth
21 during reunification, guardianship, or adoption pro-
22 ceedings;

23 (2) best practices for facilitating peer support,
24 mentoring, and the development and maintenance of
25 lifelong connections, including practices that support

1 sibling, tribal, and community connections, including
2 minimum qualifications and training for persons
3 providing mentoring and peer support;

4 (3) standards of outreach to and notification of
5 eligible youth, including youth with a planned per-
6 manent living arrangement, to ensure referrals to
7 appropriate programs and services; and

8 (4) protocols for documentation of support and
9 relationship-building activities under section 477 of
10 such Act that are required by section 475A of such
11 Act to be included in a child's case plan, sufficient
12 to permit review under the case review system de-
13 fined in section 475(5) of such Act.

14 (c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
15 this Act shall take effect on the date that is 1 year after
16 the date of the enactment of this Act.

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