



**Memo of Support for Legislation to Increase Rent Subsidies
as Part of Child Welfare Preventive Services
A.2476 (Hevesi) /S.5419 (Brisport)**

Updated May 28, 2021

The New York State Child Welfare Coalition, made up of policy advocates working to improve New York’s child welfare system for children and families, writes in strong support of A.2476/S.5419, which would double the value of rent subsidies available to parents and older youth involved in the child welfare system from up to \$300 to \$600 per month.

The goal of the child welfare housing subsidy program is to stabilize housing for families and prevent child removals, expedite reunification of children in foster care, and help youth aging out of foster care who face high risk of housing instability and homelessness. Under this existing program, families with open CPS investigations, families receiving preventive services, families where children are reunifying from foster care, and youth ages 18 through 21 are eligible for the housing subsidy through their local department of social services (LDSS). LDSSs are authorized to provide eligible families and youth with a housing subsidy of up to \$300 per month for up to three years or until reaching the limit of \$10,800. The housing subsidy program is a mandated prevention service intended to keep children out of foster care or to expedite discharge from foster care. It is one of menu of critical preventive services authorized under SSL 409, and fully funded in the recently passed state budget. The housing subsidy amount has not changed since the housing subsidy was created in 1988, although the law was amended last year to clarify that the subsidy can be used by families and youth living with roommates. With housing costs having increased exponentially since 1988, the low subsidy amount has rendered the subsidy largely ineffective at achieving its intended purpose of helping stabilize the housing of families and enabling young adults to leave foster care into independence. The bill increases the subsidy from \$300 to \$600 per month and effectively raises the total funds available to \$21,600 (\$600/month for a maximum of 36 months).

This subsidy is more critical now than any time in the recent past. Families face significant financial and housing precarity because of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. During the months initially following the pandemic, 4,200 of New York’s children lost a parent or guardian to COVID-19—that is one out of every 1,000 children. Black and Latinx children experienced the death of a parent or caregiver at twice the rate of white children, and over half of all children who experienced a death like this live in New York City.¹ Poverty – the major driver of child welfare-system involvement – is deepening for many of New York’s families. The share of children in New

¹ United Hospital Fund, *COVID-19 Ripple Effect: The Impact of COVID-19 on Children in New York State*, September 2020.

York State with a parent unemployed tripled over last summer to nearly 1 in 4.² Strengthening this subsidy is critical to helping families remain housed now. This is also critical for older youth leaving foster care. Based on national research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, about a third of transition age youth were living in their own apartment or house.³

Codifying this increase in the subsidy is also important because current COVID relief is not permanent, and the emergency payments and rental protections will likely lapse in the year ahead. For families facing potential child welfare contacts, those preparing for reunification with children, and for transition age youth living independently, this legislation is a welcome investment in a critical preventive service.

This legislation is endorsed by:

Center for Family Representation
Children’s Aid
Children’s Defense Fund-NY
Citizens’ Committee for Children of NY
Coalition for Homeless Youth
Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies
Court Appointed Special Advocates of New York City
Families Together in New York State
Forestdale
Fostering Youth Success Alliance
Good Shepherd Services
Graham Windham
JCCA
Lawyers For Children
MercyFirst

Northern Rivers Family of Services
NYU School of Law Family Defense Clinic
Prevent Child Abuse NY
Rising Ground, Inc.
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
Sheltering Arms
The Children's Agenda
The Children's Village
The Children’s Law Center
The Jewish Board of Family & Children’s Services
The Legal Aid Society
The New York Foundling
Vanderheyden Inc.
Westchester Children’s Association
You Gotta Believe

² Parolin, Zachary. 2020. “Share of Children with Unemployed Parents Reach Historic Highs During the COVID-19 Pandemic.” Poverty and Social Policy Brief. Center on Poverty and Social Policy, Columbia University. Vol. 4, no. 10.

³ https://fieldcenteratpenn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Foster-Youth-COVID-19-FINAL_Corrected.pdf at 18.