

New York Poised to Modernize Housing Subsidy that Supports Youth and Families involved in Child Welfare

Child welfare advocates celebrate Senate passage of S.5419-B to help stabilize housing for youth exiting foster care and families involved in the child welfare system, urge Assembly to pass A.1777-B, inclusive of a regular COLA increase, without delay

May 23, 2022. The CHAMPS-NY, Fostering Youth Success Alliance, and New York State Child Welfare Coalitions, statewide groups made up of advocates, providers, attorneys, and people impacted by New York's child welfare system, applaud the Senate for passing S.5419-B, legislation that would strengthen the child welfare preventive housing subsidy to reflect increased housing costs and better address the needs of youth and families involved in the child welfare system. We are hopeful the Assembly will act without delay to pass A1777-B – **a top priority of child welfare advocates for more than a decade** – and send it to the Governor's desk.

The housing subsidy program is a critical family strengthening service intended to keep children out of foster care or expedite discharge of youth from foster care. It is on a menu of critical preventive services authorized under Social Services Law 409, and fully funded in the recently passed state budget. Currently, the law authorizes local departments of social services to provide eligible families and youth with a housing subsidy of up to \$300 per month – an amount that has not changed since it was set in 1988, and which falls far short of what families and youth need to stabilize their housing in today's housing market.

Indeed, housing costs have nearly [tripled](#) since the subsidy amount was set in 1988, rendering the subsidy largely ineffective at achieving the program's intended purpose of helping stabilize the housing of families and enabling young adults to transition from foster care to independence. S.5419-B/A.1777-B would increase the subsidy from \$300 to \$725 (\$725 is the 2022 [equivalent](#) of \$300) per month, including an annual increase using calculations tied to inflation so the subsidy helps families for the long-term (referred to as a cost-of-living-adjustment, or COLA), and extend the upper age limit for youth aging out of foster care to 24. Key to the long-term success of this bill is that it includes some mechanism by which the subsidy amount increases as housing costs increase; S.5419-B/A.1777-B includes such a provision.

This subsidy is more critical now than at any time in the recent past. Families face [significant financial and housing precarity because of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis](#). Poverty – the major driver of child welfare system involvement – has deepened for many of New York's families. Strengthening this subsidy is critical to helping families remain housed and stay together. The subsidy is also critical for youth leaving foster care who are at high risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability. According to a 2021 survey of current and former youth involved in the child welfare system, [25%](#) of respondents were facing or fearing housing instability.

We urge the Assembly to pass S.5419-B/A.1777-B (inclusive of a regular COLA increase) to seize this opportunity to strengthen New York's child welfare housing subsidy program now and in the future.