MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT
A.2525-C

The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy urges New York’s legislature to pass A.2525-C, to expand the child welfare preventive housing subsidy to include youth up to age 24.

The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy is a 150-year-old statewide, nonprofit organization dedicated to policy analysis and advocacy in support of public systems that meet the needs of disenfranchised populations and people living in poverty. Schuyler Center strongly supports A.2525-C to amend the Social Services Law (SSL) to extend the upper age limit that a young person exiting foster care can receive the child welfare housing subsidy to 24, allowing youth who must leave foster care (“age out”) at 21 to avail themselves of the subsidy when they are transitioning to independent living – exactly when they need it most.

Housing is critical to the economic security of New Yorkers, and the child welfare housing subsidy is a vital support to youth exiting foster care, who often face barriers to independence, including housing instability and homeless. The goal of the child welfare housing subsidy program is to stabilize housing for youth as they transition to independent life.

Under the existing program, families with open child protective services 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). With the passage of the 2023-24 NYS Budget, LDSSs are authorized to provide eligible families and youth with a housing subsidy of up to $725 per month for up to three years. 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 on a menu of critical preventive services authorized under SSL 409, and fully funded in New York’s state budget.

Each year, approximately 1,000 youth age out of foster care. As many as one-third of youth who age out of foster care experience homelessness, and many more experience unstable housing arrangements. With homelessness and housing instability at a crisis point in New York State, straining all of New York’s housing systems, it is imperative that New York expand this housing support dedicated to youth aging out of foster care, a group often lacking any family they can fall back on during difficult times. It is imperative for New York to expand this vital preventive service this year.

Codifying this expansion to the subsidy is also important because much of the federal pandemic economic supports, including emergency payments and rental protections, ended in 2021. For transition-age youth living independently, this legislation is a much-needed expansion of a critical preventive service. By passing this piece of legislation, New York has the opportunity to strengthen its housing subsidy program so that more youth and families may find stability and independence through housing.

May 19, 2023