<u>MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT</u>
S.1863/A.7545

The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy urges the Legislature to pass S.1863/A.7545, to direct OCFS and SED to post signage of higher education funding opportunities and their eligibility requirements, available to young people with a foster care background.

The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy is a 152-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 experiencing poverty.

Every year, approximately 1,000 young people age out of the foster care system in New York State, often without the support of a caring adult or family.[1] When barriers or emergencies arise, many don't have savings, relatives, or friends to rely on.[2]

For any young person seeking to go to college, and especially young people with a foster care background, the application and financial aid processes alone can be overwhelming and confusing. Additionally, knowing the cost of a college education without knowing the financial aid options available can make attending college seem inaccessible to many prospective students. This contributes to the gap between the 63% of young people with a foster care background who would like to attend college and the 20% who enroll.[3]

However, when young people with a foster care background have access to supports such as the Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYSCI), they have impressive outcomes in their college journey. Recent data from SUNY's Rockefeller Institute for Government found that:[4]

- FYCSI recipients have higher retention rates than their peers.
- FYCSI awardees at SUNY consistently achieved higher associate degree graduation rates than their peers with a foster care background who may not yet have access to FYSCI and their Pell Grant peers.
- FYCSI awardees post higher graduation rates than their peers for bachelor's degree completion rates when adjusted for six-year degree completion.

S.1863/A.7545 increases access to information on financial aid options available to youth with a foster care background, including supportive programs like FYSCI. It does this by requiring that the Office of Children and Family Services and the State Education Department create and prominently display signage on CUNY and SUNY campuses—including admissions offices—to inform youth with a foster care background of their financial aid options to support higher education, including FYSCI. Additionally, this information must be posted on their websites to ensure that all young people have access to it. This bill would improve access to quality education in New York State for young people with a foster care background.

May 13, 2024

[1] Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy. 2024. Fostering Transparency and Accountability in New York's Child Welfare System. https://scaany.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Fostering-Transparency-and-Accountability-in-New-Yorks-Child-Welfare-System.pdf

[2] Fostering Youth Success Alliance. n.d. Moving Forward: A Post-Pandemic Blueprint for New York's Foster Youth. https://readymag.website/fysa/movingforward/

[3] Fostering Youth Success Alliance. 2024. New York's Foster Youth Need Your Continued Support. https://scaany.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2024_FYSCI-one-pager.pdf

[4] Rockefeller Institute of Government. January 2024. Fostering Success at SUNY: Financial Support through the Foster Youth College Success Initiative. https://rockinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-01-30a-Fostering-Success-at-SUNY.pdf