



The Fostering Success in Higher Education Act

**Senator Al Franken, Congressman Danny K. Davis
and Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi**



Although a college degree is paramount to securing a job with a living wage and good benefits, foster and homeless youth are continuously left behind. A [report](#) produced by the National Working Group on Foster Care and Education indicates that although 84% of 17-18 year olds in foster care want to go to college, less than 20% of those who graduate high school attend college. Furthermore, less than 10% of those that attempt college will eventually complete a post-secondary credential by the age of 25. Based on a Government Accountability Office [report](#), unaccompanied homeless youth have similar college enrollment patterns as foster youth, and although graduation rates for these youth are not accessible, we can only assume that homeless youth graduate at lower rates than their peers.

Foster and homeless youth often experience poor academic preparation due to over enrollment in low-performing high schools, considerable financial hardship, housing challenges, and limited social capital to help them navigate the college enrollment process and meet the varied demands of higher education. Moreover, foster and homeless youth are also at higher risk for lasting health and mental health effects from traumas experienced, poor health care, and other stressors that undermine college success.

To ensure foster and homeless youth have the best chance in school, work, and life, we must ensure these students have the appropriate supports to enroll and graduate with a postsecondary credential. While data captured through the 2015-16 Free Application for Federal Student Aid indicate that [less than 1%](#) of students applying for financial aid are homeless, other studies indicate this estimate may be low. For example, the California State University system [study](#) in 2015 found that between 8-12% of their undergraduates were homeless. A [recent study](#) by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab and the Association of Community College Trustees found that approximately 13-14% of community colleges students were homeless, noting that 30% of former foster youth surveyed experienced homelessness while attending community college.

This is why robust funding to support college enrollment and completion for foster and homeless youth is imperative. The *Fostering Success in Higher Education Act* would improve college access, retention, and completion rates for foster and homeless youth by substantially improving state capacity to support these students as they transition to and attend college. Specifically, this bill would:

- Invest \$150 million a year in States, tribes, & territories to establish or expand statewide initiatives to assist foster and homeless youth in enrolling in and graduating from institutions of higher education;
- Establish formula grants to states based on a state's share of foster youth and homeless youth among all 50 states and the District of Columbia, with a \$500,000 minimum grant;
- Dedicate 70 percent of state grants to develop Institutions of Excellence committed to serving foster and homeless youth via robust support services, in collaboration with organizations skilled at helping these populations, and substantial financial assistance, including covering the remaining cost of attendance beyond federal and state grants, providing comprehensive wraparound services, hiring at least one full-time case manager, and ensuring robust student health and mental services;
- Direct 25 percent of state grants to establish intensive, statewide transition initiatives to improve the college going culture and increase college enrollment by foster and homeless youth;
- Provide 7 percent of funds for technical assistance and evaluation to inform best practices; and
- Reserve 3 percent of funds to tribes, tribal consortia, or tribal organizations and 2% for territories.

To co-sponsor, contact Gohar Sedighi (Franken; 202.224.5641; Jill Hunter-Williams (Davis; 202.225.5006) or Sam Morgante (Krishnamoorthi; 202.225.3711).

Organizations Supporting *the Fostering Success in Higher Education Act*

National Organizations

- **American Psychological Association,**
- **SchoolHouse Connection**
- **Children’s Defense Fund**
- **Spaulding for Children**
- **Child Welfare League of America**
- **StandUp For Kids**
- **Family Focused Treatment Association**
- **Voice for Adoption**
- **First Focus Campaign for Children**
- **Wisconsin HOPE Lab**
- **First Star Institute, Inc.**
- **YouthVillages**
- **Girls Inc.**
- **Juvenile Law Center**
- **National Association of Counsel for Children**
- **National Association of Social Workers**
- **National Center on Adoption and Permanency**
- **National Coalition for the Homeless**
- **National Network for Youth**
- **Northwest Resource Associates/Oregon Post Adoption Resource Center**

State and Local Organizations

- **Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families**
- **PACE Center for Girls**
- **Building Changes**
- **Southwest Human Development, Inc.**
- **Child and Family Policy Center**
- **Children Awaiting Parents/DCAA**
- **Children First for Oregon**
- **Education Law Center**
- **Harmony Family Center**
- **Michigan’s Children**