



SPONSOR: Rep. Barbieri & Sen. Henry

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
146th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 18

DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES TO SUBMIT AN ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING A DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE FOSTER CARE PROGRAM FOR YOUTH/YOUNG ADULTS UP TO AGE 21.

1           WHEREAS, youth who have experienced foster care have identified extending foster care services and programs  
2 as a way to support young adults in transitioning to adulthood, finishing school, and achieving independence while having  
3 the stability of a family and/or other community supports; and

4           WHEREAS, youth who have experienced foster care indicate that they do not receive formal independent living  
5 services until age 16, that they struggle to become fully independent in two years, and that they are unable to truly integrate  
6 and practice independent living skills until after they reach age 18; and

7           WHEREAS, youth who age out of foster care face significant hardships compared to the general population,  
8 including, but not limited to securing and maintaining housing, employment, and medical coverage, as well as attaining an  
9 education; and

10          WHEREAS, approximately 100 youth age out of Delaware's foster care system annually; and

11          WHEREAS, research studies on the national population of those aging out of foster care indicate that, compared  
12 to the general population, youth who age out of foster care without appropriate family and community supports are at  
13 higher risk for being arrested (82% of males reported having been arrested by age 21), becoming homeless (22% reported  
14 having been homeless for at least one day after aging out), not completing their education, and suffering with emotional and  
15 mental health challenges including a reported lifetime prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder similar to that of many  
16 U.S. war veterans; and

17          WHEREAS, while some supports exist for youth past the age of 18 when they exit the foster care system, a  
18 developmentally appropriate, comprehensive program that fully integrates independent living services with housing, is  
19 needed to serve all youth who wish to receive assistance; and

20          WHEREAS, while much has been done in Delaware to assist youth who have experienced foster care including  
21 the establishment of groups such as the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative, the Delaware Girls Initiative, the Division

22 of Family Services' APPLA Workgroup, the Youth Advisory Council and the Child Protection Accountability  
23 Commission, no one entity has specifically studied extending foster care to age 21; and

24 WHEREAS, at least 28 states have now adopted some form of extending foster care to the age of 21; and

25 WHEREAS, the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative at the Delaware Center for Justice, Inc., brings together  
26 the people, systems, and resources necessary to assist young people who leave the foster care system by fostering  
27 successful transitions for all youth exiting care and creating a Community Partnership Board of vested cohorts; and

28 WHEREAS, studies have shown that youth who have experienced foster care have better outcomes when extended  
29 and appropriate foster care services and programs are provided to them such as that embraced by the federal John Chafee  
30 Independence Act and the 2008 Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act; and

31 WHEREAS, the State of Delaware also recognizes the benefits of providing supportive services to help youth who  
32 have been in the State's care in becoming independent and responsible adults through age 21; and

33 WHEREAS, youth who have experienced foster care, including the leadership of Delaware's Youth Advisory  
34 Council, have requested consideration of creating a developmentally appropriate foster care program to age 21 to assist  
35 with their successful transition into adulthood;

36 NOW, THEREFORE:

37 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the 146<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the State of  
38 Delaware, with the approval of the Governor, that the Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families  
39 ("DSCYF") shall submit an analysis and recommendations for creating a developmentally appropriate foster care program  
40 for youth/young adults up to age 21.

41 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DSCYF shall oversee and advise the development of the analysis and  
42 recommendations, with representation from state agencies, advocacy groups, and community organizations, and most  
43 importantly current and former foster care youth, as follows:

- 44 1. At least one (1) Judge from the Family Court, as designated by the Chief Judge of the Family Court;
- 45 2. The Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, or the Secretary's  
46 designee;
- 47 3. The Coordinator of the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative, or the Coordinator's designee;
- 48 4. The Director of the Division of Family Services, or the Director's designee;
- 49 5. The Child Advocate, or the Child Advocate's designee;
- 50 6. At least one (1) member of the House of Representatives, designated by the Speaker of the House;
- 51 7. At least one (1) member of the Senate, designated by the President *pro tempore*;

52           8. At least five (5) youth who have experienced foster care, including at least two (2) representatives from the  
53 Youth Advisory Council, as designated by DSCYF;

54           9. At least one (1) representative from education and academic organizations, as designated by DSCYF;

55           10. At least one (1) representative from community agencies and programs serving youth, as designated by  
56 DSCYF; and

57           11. At least one (1) foster parent or group care provider, as designated by DSCYF.

58           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in developing the analysis and recommendations, DSCYF shall provide  
59 information on the programs and services needed for youth to successfully transition, as well as a fiscal analysis of and  
60 funding recommendations for a developmentally appropriate foster care program to age 21 which must reflect the voices of  
61 the state's youth to ensure continual participation and involvement which is necessary to fully understand the specific needs  
62 and interests of the population.

63           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DSCYF shall report the findings and recommendations to the Governor, the  
64 General Assembly, the Youth Advisory Council and the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative Community Partnership  
65 Board no later than September 17, 2012.

#### SYNOPSIS

This resolution is in response to recommendations from Delaware's Youth Advisory Council, which is comprised of youth who have experienced foster care and who speak on behalf of all youth in care. The Youth Advisory Council provides the opportunity for youth, who are sincere about improving foster care, to assemble and discuss issues and possible solutions. The Youth Advisory Council members, in collaboration with the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative, have asked the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families and the General Assembly to consider creating a developmentally appropriate foster care program for youth/young adults up to the age of 21 to assist with their successful transition to adulthood. This resolution requires significant youth participation in submitting a timely analysis and report on the practical and fiscal impacts of extending Delaware's foster care program to age 21.