

The Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio (OHIO) Youth Advisory Board exists to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that impact youth who have or will experience out of home care.



1/13/2022

Good morning,

This message is directed to Governor DeWine and to the leadership team at the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

My name is Raven Grice, and I am a member of the Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board, which is a statewide organization of young people (aged 14-24) who have experienced foster care.

I am writing to request that the state of Ohio extend foster care until age 23, as authorized by the federal Family First Act. According to Section 303(a)(2)(C)(ii) of the Family First Prevention Services Act, states are eligible to elect to extend the use of Chafee funding to serve former foster youth through the age of 23.

I left foster care at age 17 when I went to college, and I am scheduled to graduate soon after I turn 21. The Bridges program currently assists me with groceries and housing, and the closer I get to age 21, the more nervous I become. My campus dorm is my only address, and once I graduate, I will have to move out within a week.

After having worked so hard to pursue college, I truly do not want to end up homeless immediately after graduation. This is why I press this matter so urgently. I encourage everyone who reads this to please understand the direct impact that losing resources has on so many young people throughout the state of Ohio.

If the state of Ohio moves forward to extend foster care supports to age 23, this will:

- Prevent me from becoming homeless
- Assist me in securing an apartment or other post-college living situation
- Provide me with the time I need to find a stable job in order to stay afloat

It is difficult to work while being a full-time student. This is especially true because I am part of a scholarship program that specifically prohibits me from working more than 10 hours a week. I cannot support myself on 10 hours a week and attempting to do so would be setting myself up for failure.

The Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio (OHIO) Youth Advisory Board exists to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that impact youth who have or will experience out of home care.

I am and will continue to be a strong advocate for my peers in and from foster care because we are set at a disadvantage from those who have not experienced care. We lack family privilege and cannot rely on our parents for help. When you are parented by a system rather than a family, it is sometimes difficult for us to reach out for help. We don't know who we can rely upon.

Ohio foster youth and young adults face this question daily. It is for this reason that the OHIO YAB is asking the state of Ohio to please extend foster care supports to age 23. This would make it possible for those of us who are graduating college or facing a major transitional period between 20-23 may have the supports they need.

States that have already increased their funding to age 23 have better youth outcomes and lower youth homelessness rates.

Coming to college gave me the opportunity to get my degree and have stable housing but **as graduation draws nearer, my uncertainty is growing.** This is a fear that is shared by foster youth all over Ohio during times of transition, such as graduating high school or college. Extending foster care to age 23 would provide us with additional time to secure stable housing, employment and financial stability.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony and for recognizing the urgency of Ohio making this change as soon as possible. The lives and futures of Ohio young people are literally at stake.

Raven Grice
(216) 298-7187
ravenwolfe0921@gmail.com