



### **Ways and Means Leaders**

### **Introduce Bipartisan**

### **Bill [H.R. 7947] to Provide**

### **Emergency Support for**

### **Foster Youth and Child**

### **Welfare Services**

H.R. 7947 - The Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act filed by Chairman Danny K. Davis and Ranking Member Jackie Walorski, targeted support to protect vulnerable youth impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **The Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act**

- Increases funding and provides support for older youth who experienced foster care:
- Provides \$350 million for the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful
- Transition to Adulthood (Chafee) to support older foster youth and youth transitioning into adulthood.
- Provides \$50 million for the Educational & Training Vouchers Program and increases maximum award amount to \$12,000 per youth.
- Temporarily waives state match requirement for additional Chafee funding.
- Raises the maximum age for Chafee-eligible former foster youth through age 26.
- Provides temporary program flexibilities, including lifting the 30 percent spending cap on housing costs and accommodating pandemic-related disruptions in work and education.
- Prevents children from aging out of foster care and being at risk of homelessness during the pandemic:

- Prohibits states from requiring a child to leave foster care solely due to their age during the pandemic.
- For youth who have “aged out” of foster care during the pandemic, requires states to permit youth to voluntarily re-enter care.
- Allows states to use additional Chafee funds to offset costs caused by these requirements for youth not eligible for federal matching funds. Expands access to Family First Prevention Services:
- During the public health emergency, waives state match for evidence-based mental health, substance abuse, and parenting skill services, to allow states to invest in prevention services that keep children safely at home.
- Provides emergency funding for the MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families program:
- Provides \$75 million and waives state match for additional funds to support family preservation, family reunification, adoption, and other supportive services. Expands funding for the Court Improvement Program:
- Provides an additional \$10 million for courts handling child welfare cases and temporary flexibilities to conduct virtual hearings, and waives the state match for the new funds. 2 Flexibilities for home visiting programs to continue to serve families safely:
- Temporarily allows necessary program flexibilities in the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Education Home Visiting program, including virtual home visits, sustained funding for staffing and allows states to use federal funds which would otherwise revert back to U.S. Department of the Treasury. Expands access to kinship navigator programs:
  - During the public health emergency, waives the state match and allows states to use models not yet in the Evidence Clearinghouse for kinship navigator programs, to provide greater access to federal funding to support grandparents and kin caregivers. Makes technical corrections needed in response to FMAP increase:
- Makes a technical correction to Title IV-E treatment of the 6.2% Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) increase for Family First Transition Act funding.
- Makes a technical correction to apply the 6.2% FMAP rate increase to the District of Columbia’s foster care program in the same way it applies to states.

*[The Bill is intended to be added to COVID Stimulus funding legislation]*



## **Co-Sponsors Added to S.4172 - Child Welfare Emergency Assistance Act**

As reported last month, The Child Welfare Emergency Assistance Act, filed by Senators Brown, Harris, Casey and Cortez Masto [all Democrats] is designed to provide flexible, emergency aid for key child welfare programs to help stabilize children, young people and families in crisis while encouraging communities to work in partnership with and learn from people with relevant lived experiences”.

Since filing the Bill on July 2, 2020, the legislation has received an additional 12 Co-Sponsors [all Democrats]. The include Sen. Stabenow from Michigan, Sen. Whitehouse from Rhode Island, Sen. Menendez from New Jersey, Sen. Bennet from Colorado, Sen. Blumenthal from Connecticut, Sen. Cardin from Maryland, Sen. Gillibrand from New York, Sen. Feinstein from California, Sen. Rosen from Nevada, Sen. Reed from Rhode Island, Sen. Booker from New Jersey, and Sen. Warren from Massachusetts.

Among other things, the Child Welfare Emergency Assistance Act would devote \$2 billion to enable state and tribal child welfare agencies to provide families, kinship caregivers, and young people with a broad range of support services, including assistance for transportation, housing, and utility payments. Welfare agencies could also use this funding to expand adoption promotion and support services, or to hire, train and support caseworkers to conduct safe in-person home visits, including the purchase of personal protective equipment and technology.

There are a myriad of other programs costing millions of dollars to provide, but the largest category is to provide \$500 for the John H. Chafe Foster Care Independence Program to ensure young people have access to supports, such as housing, food, and cash assistance, and allow more of the funds to cover housing costs for foster care youth Funds could also be used for education and training vouchers, which help young people cover the cost of education.

[Note: The legislation reportedly is intended to be added to COVID Stimulus funding legislation]

### ***Editor's Note:***

The aforementioned legislation makes no reference to the pending shortage of residential resources for children. The current foster home shortage coupled with the expected surge of children needing foster care placement due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, will potentially overload the child welfare system across the United States and reduce their capacity to care for foster children in a family like settings. In fact, some states that have already implemented FFPSA, are waiving the capacity of a foster home in order for them to serve more than six children.

The seriousness of the dilemma becomes acutely more intense when the waiver from FFPSA for approximately half of the States, expires on September 30, 2021. The lack of available foster care resources is the impetus for their needing the waiver. Add that population of children into the mix of children for whom there are not ample resources and the child welfare system will cease to be a safety net for children.

As noted in last month's report, The CHAMPS Report (published in June 2020) represents an analysis of the foster care program across 42 states. According to the report: "With few exceptions noted in the report, most plans lacked evidence that high level leaderships within and across agencies were engaged in support of foster parent recruitment and retention.

## **CORE's Legislative Efforts**

Earlier in the month, I sent an email to our membership apologizing for the confusing and rough start that surrounded our multiple requests of you for immediate assistance in involving your legislators to support inclusion of legislation to get the cottage home care bill attached to the pending COVID stimulus package.

Unfortunately, as of today, I have no definitive information to share confirming actual filing of the cottage home care bill. Dana Hudson, the lobbyist representing CORE, is actively involved in this process. All I can report is that we are one day closer. As recently as yesterday, we had confirmation that getting the bill filed continues to be a priority from the filing Representative's Office.



Once I have confirmation that the bill has been filed, I will reach out to you. Too many anticipated targeted filing dates have come and gone, so until I know something definitively, I will join you in patiently waiting.

The problem related to information and access is compounded by closure of Federal Office Buildings on Capitol Hill to the public. All Federal Office Buildings have been closed since March and reportedly are not scheduled to reopen until some yet undetermined time in 2021.

**2020 CORE National Conference  
Postponed Until  
April 20-22, 2021**



Mooseheart Child City and School in Mooseheart, Illinois, has agreed to host the National CORE Conference previously scheduled for October 2020.

## **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER**



The Brownson Home in Victoria, Texas was recently accepted as a member of the Coalition of Residential Excellence. Rise Konarik is the Executive Director.

The home is named after and made possible by the estate of John Milton Brownson and his wife Catherine. Mr. Brownson was founder of the Brownson's Bank which later became the First Victoria National Bank. Mr. Brownson died in 1906. Following Mrs. Brownson's death in 1932, the estate was left for the establishment of The Brownson Children's Home.

Mrs. Brownson instructed that the home provide clothing, shelter, food, education, medical attention, general training, and welfare of the children as well as their religious training. It was Mrs. Brownson's vision that the home never be thought of as a orphanage, but rather a "home" with all the children being one family.

The campus includes a statute of Christ with open arms. That is representative of compassion for those in need. The Brownson Home is a small facility with a capacity for 16 children.

There are two residential cottages for children. Children attend the public school system and are afforded opportunities of extracurricular school and community activities.

The agency takes only private placement children. Many families are referred to the agency from the Department of Family and Protective Services, but the home does not have a contract to serve children in conservatorship of DFPS.