

Congress Passes \$900 Billion Coronavirus Relief Bill, Ending Months-Long Stalemate on December 21, 2020

Reportedly, the Senate acted swiftly Monday night, in a 92-6 vote, to approve more than \$900 billion for coronavirus assistance, shortly after the House of Representatives passed the package.



As you might suspect, the spending package which was 5,593 pages in length, included a myriad of other bills. Included in the legislation was H.R. 7947 - **Supporting Foster Youth & Families Through the Pandemic Act** initially introduced by Representative Danny Davis [D-IL] and Representative Jackie Walorski [R-IN].

The bill was initially introduced on August 7, 2020 and garnered 55 co-sponsors by the time it was folded into the \$900 Billion Coronavirus Relief Bill. Reportedly, as a direct response to the COVID-19 crisis, Chairman Davis and Ranking Member Walorski introduced the bipartisan H.R. 7947 to provide emergency temporary supports and flexibilities for older foster youth, grandparents raising grandchildren & other kinship families, home visiting for at-risk pregnant & parenting families, foster care prevention services, and other child welfare services through the end of FY 2021.

Key components of the Legislation include

- ◆ An additional \$350 million for the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee);
- ◆ An additional \$50 million for Chafee Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) [waiving the state match for these funds] and:
 - increases the maximum ETV award amount from \$5,000 to \$12,000 per youth for training and postsecondary education for eligible youth in foster care;
 - raises the maximum age of ETV eligibility through 26 for Chafee-eligible former foster youth

- o Additional Chafee program flexibility for older youth in foster care by:
 - o suspending certain training and postsecondary education requirements
 - o clarifying that under these provisions the Chafee ETV vouchers may be used to maintain training and postsecondary education costs, as well as to support programs to allow foster youth to drive, and
 - o Lifting the 30 percent spending cap on housing costs
 - o Allowing older youth "aging out" of foster care to continue to receive foster care supports and services during the pandemic, or if they have already aged out during this period, return to care
- ◆ Waiving the state match for Family First Prevention Services until the end of the public emergency health period; and
- ◆ An additional \$85 million in FY 2021 funding for the Mary Lee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families program which provides states with funding for community-based family support and other prevention services.

As anticipated, **H.R. 8443 "Cottage Homes To Improve Lives for Dependents (CHILD) Act"** did not make it through the 116th Congress by the January 3, 2021 deadline . Consequently, the Act will need to be re-filed in the 117th Congressional Session.



We anticipate legislation intended to add Cottage Home Care to the continuum of care for which federal funding can be provided will be re-introduced in the 117th Congressional Session. The Session begins on January 3, 2021 and will end of January 3, 2023.

The legislative committee for the Coalition of Residential Excellence has been in contact with Rep. Dunn's office. As soon as we know definitively when the next bill will be filed, we will be in contact with members of CORE to discuss the next steps and plans for your involvement in contacting legislators representing your district.

2021 CORE Membership Dues

Remittance by January 31, 2021
if at all possible



Shortage of Foster Homes, Child Deaths & Impact of COVID-19

October 1, 2021 is the deadline for expiration of waivers extended to states who requested exemption from FFPSA because of their lack of foster homes to provide care for children not needing treatment services, but who continue to need out of home placement. **Currently there are 27 states that fall into that category.**

In keeping with the format I began in October by highlighting news articles and publications that call attention to lack of available resources for children needing out of home care because of abuse/neglect, child deaths subsequent to CPS investigations and/or law enforcement involvement, and the undue stress the Pandemic is contributing to the lives of foster parents reducing the numbers of foster homes, the following examples are provided for December publications:

- ◆ December 31, 2020 Comanche County [Lawton Constitution] - While there is always a great need for foster families, the pandemic has only exacerbated the shortage. In Comanche County alone, there are 300 children in the Oklahoma foster care system; statewide, there are over 7,500.
<https://bit.ly/3htzuMW>
- ◆ December 25, 2020 Illinois - Foster Parents Needed As COVID-19 Pandemic Strains Families. Thousands of children in Illinois are in need of warm, loving homes as the pandemic has placed a big strain on families.
<https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2020/12/25/covid-19-foster-parents-needed-pandemic/>
- ◆ December 21, 2020 Arizona “Hundreds of children died in Arizona in 2019. Almost half of those deaths could have been prevented [Arizona Republic] A total of 777 Arizona children died in 2019. Nearly half those deaths could have been prevented. That’s the conclusion of an annual state study intended to reduce child fatalities by analyzing the manner of the deaths and the risk factors connected with them
<https://bit.ly/3pfypLb>
- ◆ December 18, 2020 The Dallas Morning News suggests the crisis that led to foster children sleeping in state offices because there was no other place for them to go - a crisis of capacity - continues, and has been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. Bob Garrett, who has covered the story from the start for The Dallas Morning News, told Texas Standard that in November, 126 children spent two or more consecutive nights in an office, or with Child Protective Services staff in a temporary location.
https://www.texasstandard.org/stories/soaring-number-of-texas-foster-children-sleeping-in-state-offices-again/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

- ◆ December 17, 2020 [West Virginia Public Broadcasting] WV: Is W. Va.'s Foster Care System Failing Children? A Look Inside An Agency Wrestling With Long-Term Reforms "When the opioid epidemic hit foster care systems saw a massive increase in the number of kids in care, Roughly, 6,900 children in the state are in foster care, an increase of 60% over the past six years.
https://www.wvpublic.org/2020-12-17/is-w-va-s-foster-care-system-failing-children-a-look-inside-an-agency-wrestling-with-long-term-reforms?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

- ◆ December 11, 2020 Washington: The Pandemic is Forcing Kids to Sleep in Hotels and Offices - Over the past year, hundreds of foster children in Washington state slept in hotels and offices because no foster placement was available.
<https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2020/12/the-pandemic-is-forcing-foster-kids-to-sleep-in-hotels-and-offices/>

- ◆ December 07, 2020 WA: Hotel stays up, child abuse reports down. New report highlights COVID impacts on WA child welfare
The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in Washington fosters youth spending more nights in hotel rooms while overall reports of child abuse and neglect had declined precipitously.
<https://www.spokanepublicradio.org/post/hotel-stays-child-abuse-reports-down-new-report-highlights-covid-impacts-wa-child-welfare#stream/0>

- ◆ December 5, 2020 - DC - Another D.C. child is dead. The systems that should have protected him failed - Another 2 year old dead after abuse investigations by both child protective services and police. \ https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/another-dc-child-is-dead-the-systems-that-should-have-protected-him-failed/2020/12/04/d5cd8b7c-25fb-11eb-8672-c281c7a2c96e_story.html?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

- ◆ December 3, 2020 - Alabama [Andalusia Star-News] With Covid-19 pandemic raging on, local employees of the Covington County Department of Human Resources have not been able to recruit future foster parents, causing a decline of interest in the area.
https://www.andalusiastarnews.com/2020/12/03/dhr-sees-decrease-in-foster-parent-interest-during-covid-19-pandemic/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

- ◆ November 30, 2020 Pensacola, FL Child welfare advocates are reporting more than a 50% jump in abuse cases during COVID-19
https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2020/11/30/child-abused-sees-50-increase-during-covid-10-child-welfare-expert/6420500002/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

- ◆ November 26, 2020 Chicago - The impact of COVID-19 on the foster care system has been overlooked. "We have seen a 30% increase in the number of youth that are in need of foster homes and in need of foster parenting.

https://abc7chicago.com/family/need-for-loving-foster-care-homes-increases/8284226/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery



SAVE The DATE - APRIL 20-22, 2021

2021 CORE NATIONAL CONFERENCE
MOOSEHEART CHILD CITY SCHOOL