



LB 216: The Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support Act

The Problem

The current system results in poor outcomes for far too many young people who age out of foster care.

- **Less than 2% finished college**, compared to 23% of the general population.¹
- **Over 50% experienced homelessness.**²
- Many others **struggled with employment, health care access, and, ultimately, poverty.**³

The Solution

Research shows that extending voluntary services and support for youth who age out of foster care:

- **Cuts rates of homelessness** in half.⁴
- **Increases lifetime earnings** by an estimated average of \$72,000 per person.⁵
- **Lowers rates of unplanned pregnancies.**⁶
- **Doubles the percentage who earn a college degree**, from 10.2% to 20.4%.⁷
- **Lessons risk of future incarceration.**⁸

Providing critical support during the transition into adulthood

LB 216, introduced by Senator Amanda McGill, gives Nebraska the opportunity to create an age-appropriate, youth-focused system of voluntary services and support to 21 for young people who age out of foster care.

LB 216 is fiscally responsible

- > Many of these young people have already experienced years of trauma and instability and are now struggling to work and get an education with few resources to fall back on, and that has a cost on all of us. We miss out on their human potential and a stronger workforce due to the barriers they face in becoming successful adults. LB 216 removes those barriers.
- > With the federal government covering nearly half of the cost, a fiscal analysis of this type of program in Nebraska conducted by Mainspring Consulting estimated the fiscal impact as **less than \$3 million annually for the first two years of implementation**, increasing slowly to between \$5 million and \$6 million in 2017.
- > A study by Chapin Hall estimates that **the financial benefits of investing in this population by providing services and support outweigh the cost by a factor of approximately 2 to 1.**⁹

LB 216 is well researched and strongly supported

- > This is a **proven program**, with 16 other states having plans that are approved by the federal government and many more showing interest.
- > National research has shown that extending services and support to young adults who age out of foster care **improves long-term outcomes in a number of areas**, such as education, employment, and housing stability.^{10, 11}
- > A broad working group of Nebraska stakeholders, including young people and both local agencies and national representatives, have been meeting over the past year to engage in a collaborative program design process and develop the fiscal analysis.
- > This bill was also informed by two interim studies (LR 305 and LR 537), including surveys of over 100 young people and 250 stakeholders across the state, and **extensive research and guidance from national experts.**

Passing LB 216 allows Nebraska to take the opportunity under federal law to implement a voluntary program of services and support and remove barriers for youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood.

LB 216 is a good investment in the future of our children and our state.

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How LB 216 Works

Overall Highlights

Here are a few key things to know about this program:

- Eligible young adults who choose to participate **sign an agreement** with the Department of Health and Human Services to receive services.
- Eligible young adults can **opt in and/or opt out** any time before turning 21.
- Under federal law and LB 216, **mechanisms of oversight** would include administrative and permanency reviews and monthly caseworker visits.

Eligibility Requirements

Young adults must be doing at least one of the following to be eligible for this program:

- Completing **secondary education**.
- Enrolled in **post-secondary education**.
- **Employed** at least 80 hours per month.
- Participating in a program or activity to **remove barriers to employment**.
- Unable to do any of those things because of a **medical condition**.

Services and Support for Young Adults

Services to age 21 for young adults who aged out of foster care include:

- **Medicaid coverage**.*
- **Housing support**.
- Age-appropriate **case management services**.

Services to age 21 for young adults who were adopted or who entered a guardianship at age 16 or older include:

- **Medicaid coverage**.
- Continued **adoption/guardianship subsidies**.

*Starting in 2014, this population will be covered under the Affordable Care Act.

Notes

¹ Marci McCoy-Roth (July 2011), *Child Welfare and Youth Homelessness: The Fostering Connections Act*, available at http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2011_07_14_SP_CWHomelessness.pdf

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (n.d.), *Foster Care to 21: Doing it Right*, available at <http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/sites/default/files/Issue%20Brief%20-%20FC%20to%202021.pdf>

⁵ Clark M Peters, Amy Dworsky, Mark E Courtney, & Harold Pollack (June 2009), *Extending Foster Care to Age 21: Weighing the Costs to Government Against the Benefits to Youth*, available at <http://www.chapinhall.org/research/brief/extending-foster-care-age-21-weighing-costs-government-against-benefits-youth>

⁶ Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (n.d.), *Foster Care to 21: Doing it Right*, available at <http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/sites/default/files/Issue%20Brief%20-%20FC%20to%202021.pdf>

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Clark Peteres, Katie S. Claussen Bell, Andrew Zinn, Robert M. Goerge, & Mark E. Courtney (July 2008), *Continuing in Foster Care Beyond Age 18: How Courts Can Help*, available at <http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/publications/Beyond%2018%20Issue%20Brief%20redesign%2002-04-09.pdf>

⁹ Clark M Peters, Amy Dworsky, Mark E Courtney, & Harold Pollack (June 2009), *Extending Foster Care to Age 21: Weighing the Costs to Government Against the Benefits to Youth*, available at <http://www.chapinhall.org/research/brief/extending-foster-care-age-21-weighing-costs-government-against-benefits-youth>

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (n.d.), *Foster Care to 21: Doing it Right*, available at <http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/sites/default/files/Issue%20Brief%20-%20FC%20to%202021.pdf>