

State isn't equipped to give youths a hand after they turn 18

ELISE PATKOTAK
COMMENT

(03/10/09 18:51:28)

I've said it before and I'll say it again. The state makes a lousy parent. It rarely remembers your birthday and it almost never takes a turn having all the relatives over for the holidays. But if you're a kid stuck in state custody, it's often all you have in the way of a parent except maybe for an ever changing cast of foster parents.

This is not a condemnation of the state or its system of caring for children in its custody. Given the resources we are willing to provide for this service, and given the needs of the children who become part of the system, the Office of Children's Services is pretty much doing the best it can.

The problem has always been that words are much cheaper than actual actions. So we make a big fuss about children being our future and then try to meet the needs of the future on a shoestring budget. If you think about what it costs to raise a child from birth to maturity under the best of circumstances, you can pretty much quadruple that cost for a child coming out of a nightmarish family situation who may or may not be already damaged almost beyond repair. Quadrupling the cost is probable a conservative estimate.

For many of these kids, the future is predetermined way before the state is actively involved. Whether it's because mom drank during pregnancy and brought the child into the world with 10 strikes already against him or her, or whether mom and dad created such a hellish family life of physical, sexual and mental abuse that the child is totally screwed up before he or she is 5 years old, the result is pretty much the same. The child starts life at an extreme disadvantage.

Take that child and put him into a state system that tries to supply some stability but is often hampered by rules that require the child to be bounced back and forth between birth family and foster care multiple times before the state is allowed to terminate parental rights, and you have the recipe for total disaster.

Anytime a child comes out of this kind of background with his or her head screwed on right, still able to dream of a better life and future, mentally capable of grasping academic subjects and studying for a career in life outside of adult penal institutions, I must stand up in awe and wonder and applaud that child's resilience.

There is a move in our state Legislature to allow the state to provide graduates of foster care and family services a chance at a postsecondary education, complete with some funding to support their living needs while they get their education. This is nothing more nor less than what most families do for their children as they start the process of emancipation into productive adults.

But kids coming out of the state system usually don't have a family willing and able to pick up the slack while they get that education. They have no one to turn to who can guide them through the shoals of applying for housing, putting a budget together, or getting a part-time job to help meet expenses. These kids don't have something as simple as an adult they can shoot the breeze with

over the future and what's out there for them. You know, the kind of conversation you have with your kid while you're driving them to the movies or school or sitting around during the commercials on ESPN.

The state has already started to try and meet these needs through transitional living assistance to young people as they age out of the system. That's a great start. But it isn't enough, because once we wave goodbye to them when they turn 18, they are on their own at a time when most of us would have been hard pressed to make good decisions for our future without some continuing adult guidance.

That these kids survived despite what their birth families did to them is a miracle. That they can come out of the state system and still have dreams of a better future is astounding. That there is any debate at all that we should be doing all we can for them is mind-boggling.

Elise Patkotak is a writer who lives in Anchorage. Read her blog at www.elisepatkotak.com.

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Children of the System

New research supports a radical shift in child-welfare policy for the thousands of teens who 'age out' of foster care at age 18, only to face high rates of homelessness, unemployment and incarceration.

Daniel Heimpel
Newsweek Web Exclusive

Eighteen-year-old John Kyzer's blue eyes are bleary and the skin around them puffy as he paces a corner of Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles. Kyzer has been spending his nights on a bench in front of a Starbucks. And now, he is dangerously close to entering the ranks of dozens of other former foster youth who "cop a squat" (sit) on concrete stairwells and sleep in "abandos" (abandoned buildings) up and down the street.

Soon after his 18th birthday, the state of California "terminated" Kyzer's case and he was forced to leave his group home. He moved in with his girlfriend and their 4-month-old baby in the home she shared with three generations of her family. Wanting to help support his son, Kyzer got a job at Starbucks and worked as many hours as the boss would give him. For two months his confidence brimmed.

But then he did something many teenagers do. He blew off work and was fired. Now, the door to his girlfriend's house is shut. Kyzer is on his own.

For Kyzer and many of the more than 25,000 other foster youth in the United States who "age out" of the system every year, there is no family and no support network to pick you up when you fall. Within two years of emancipation, half of Los Angeles County's foster youth will be unemployed, one fifth will be homeless and a quarter will have been to prison, according to the Children's Law Center. Similar fates can be expected across the country for many of the 500,000 children who call the state their parents.

But a law signed by President Bush in the waning days of his administration could radically change the futures of these children. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 offers states matching federal funds to extend care to age 21 for all foster youth who choose to stay in the system after their 18th birthday. What's meant by "care" would vary state by state, but could include extending Medicaid coverage to age 21 (which about 20 states now do), providing housing vouchers or access to group homes, vocational training, educational funding and psychological counseling services.

"We have known for a long time that kids don't suddenly become self-sufficient at the age of 18," says the federal bill's sponsor, Rep. Jim McDermott of Washington state. "The law we passed last year finally recognized the need to better provide the building blocks of success to these children."

Research released Monday suggests that the approach makes financial sense for a government weighed down by the costs of incarceration, welfare, Medicaid and homelessness incurred by former foster youth who struggle after emancipation. Conducted by the University of Washington School of Social Work, the study finds that caring for young adults until age 21 will represent a return of \$2.40 on every government dollar spent in California.

Experts hope the report will lead more states to implement the federal law. But adding anything to

a state budget right now is a hard sell. Thus far only seven states have put forward such legislation, including California. And before the passage of the federal legislation, only two states had implemented comprehensive extended care for foster kids after age 18—Illinois and Vermont.

The study's leading researcher, Mark Courtney, director of Partners for Our Children, a public-private collaboration promoting child-welfare reform at the University of Washington, sees the federal legislation as the most radical shift in child-welfare policy in the last decade. "The government has been unwilling to help kids after 18 beyond teaching them independent-living skills," he says. "That is not what parents do. A parent is not happy to kick a kid out at 18 and say good luck."

Courtney's earlier work has shown significant long-term benefits for kids who get a few more year's care versus those who are pushed out of the system at 18. His hallmark "Midwest Study," published in 2005, was instrumental in shaping the current federal legislation. That report followed 732 foster youth through their 17th, 18th and 21st birthdays. It found that along with lower rates of incarceration, homelessness and unemployment, young people in a state like Illinois, which extends care until 21, were 3.5 times as likely to have completed a year of college than peers in states like Iowa and Wisconsin, which routinely cut care at 18. (Census data show that less than 3 percent of foster kids earn college degrees, compared with 28 percent of the population as a whole.)

"The minute we kick them out they start looking for their families," says Karen Bass, speaker of the California Assembly and coauthor of The California Fostering Connections to Success Act. The legislation plans to increase spending to \$70 million in California for youths age 18 to 21, largely through the newly available federal funds. "When they can't find their families, they make families of their own on Hollywood Boulevard. In L.A., they are couch surfing; you have groups of young people living together and it is homelessness, just a different form." Bass and coauthor Jim Beall say that despite the budget wrangle and deficits that California faces, the bill bears the name of 26 Assembly members, has wide cross-aisle support and will likely pass.

In this latest study of foster care, Courtney narrowed his focus on higher education. As he had already shown, young people in extended care were better equipped to pursue a higher level of education and thus vastly increased their lifetime earning potential. For an expenditure of \$37,948 over the course of extended care, Courtney concludes that those foster youth will earn \$92,000 more in their working life. "We are talking about spending \$38,000 over one to three years versus what it costs to incarcerate somebody for 20 to 30 years," says Bass. In California, the Department of Corrections anticipates the annual cost of incarceration will jump to \$53,000 in fiscal year 2009-10.

But these undeniable statistics are running headlong into the cold reality of a national financial crisis. "Here is the most significant piece of [foster-care] legislation in a decade and it may be slowed down by these economic times," says Kathi Crowe, executive director of the Foster Care Coalition. "It's almost too bad it is optional." Nonetheless, Courtney believes that the evidence he has presented along with the National Youth in Transition Database, which will be implemented nationwide as of October 2010 and will track young people as they mature into adulthood, will force states to act. "At that point some states may be shamed into changing their laws if the outcomes of their former foster youth look much worse than the outcomes for youth in states that have extended care to 21."

But for Kyzer and the kids currently "copping a squat" on the streets, it may be too late. "I just wasn't ready," Kyzer says of being a father, holding a job and moving into his own place. Tonight he is couch surfing, but tomorrow, his only option may be an abando.

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Anchorage School District

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd
Anchorage, Alaska 99504-3135
(907) 742-4000

March 11, 2009

To Members of the House Education Committee:

I am writing in support of CS for HB 126 (EDC) which relates to the education of students who are homeless or in foster care or awaiting foster care. As you know, we have a large and growing homeless population in our district; we also have a large and growing number of students awaiting placement in foster care or who are in foster care. One of the major challenges for these young people is finding stability in their lives, including being able to attend school on a regular basis.

It is a well-known fact that when students stay in the same school for the whole school year, there is more opportunity for the student to be academically successful. The Anchorage School District and School Board have worked for years to help parents understand the importance of keeping their children in the same school as long as possible. In the case of homeless students, and those in foster care or awaiting foster care placement, we feel strongly that we need to follow the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act for homeless students, which requires us to provide transportation to and from the student's original school for the school year. In the case of foster children and those awaiting placement, we support the language in this proposed legislation as long as there is some funding for this requirement. The Anchorage School District provided \$150,000 to supplement federal funding for transportation last year and would anticipate an increase again this year.

I commend Representatives Gara, Crawford, and Kerttula for bringing this legislation forward and hope that you will support its passage.

Please feel free to contact me at comeau_carol@asdk12.org if you have need for more information.

Sincerely yours,

Carol Comeau
Superintendent



Crisis Center • Community Services Center • Transitional Living

Representative Les Gara and Senator Bettye Davis
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

February 23, 2009

Dear Representative Gara and Senator Davis,

Thank you for introducing legislation to address the needs of foster care youth, both while they are in the state's custody and when they "age-out" of the current system. Providing resources and support to our foster care children decreases the need for long-term public assistance and criminal justice resources. Responding to research that clearly identifies proven strategies for assisting our youth to independent adulthood is not only compassionate, it is fiscally sound policy.

Between 35% and 50% of foster care youth become homeless after being released from care. Covenant House Alaska (CHA) serves the homeless and at-risk youth of our state through four main programs (50% of CHA youth have been involved in the foster care system). Our Crisis Center provides shelter, food, clothing, primary health care and support resources to homeless youth. Our Community Services Center is a drop-in center that provides case management, employment assistance, educational tutoring, counseling and substance abuse referrals and life skills training. Two different programs, Rights of Passage and Passage House help youth transition to independent living and self-sufficiency. Youth can participate in either program for 18 months with up to 12 months of additional aftercare.

Through these programs, CHA is certain that increased job training, educational opportunities, rental assistance and social worker visits will benefit children in foster care. Similarly, offering consistency whenever possible through maintaining one school for children despite changes in foster care placement is essential. CHA appreciates the multi-faceted approach HB 126 and SB 105 offers.

Thank you for sponsoring this legislation and providing a voice to youth in foster care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deirdre Cronin".

Deirdre A. Cronin
Executive Director

Opening Doors for Homeless Youth

Facing Foster Care in Alaska (FFCA)
3108 W. 42nd Ave. #6
Anchorage, AK 99517
February 17, 2009

Representative
Les Gara
Alaska State Legislator
AK State Capitol Rm 500
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Gara:

Your continued concern for Alaska's foster children and youth is admirable, and House Bill 126 demonstrates that concern.

As current and former foster youth of Alaska's child welfare system, we would like to thank you for your ongoing support in addressing the need for reform. Many of Alaska's foster children are being set up for failure due to a state system that is lacking many of the resources these young people need to succeed. Statistics show that youth who leave Alaska's foster care system become homeless at a rate of 40%, fall behind in their education, and have a high rate of adult incarceration. We wholeheartedly support your bill that creates opportunities for children and youth in foster care to succeed.

Thank you for your concern and your untiring pursuit to improve the lives of those who are less fortunate. You have our support.

Sincerely,

Amanda Metivier
FFCA Coordinator





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April 6, 2009

**The Honorable
Representative Les Gara
Alaska State Capitol
Room 500
Juneau, AK 99801**

Re: SUPPORT HB 126

Dear Representative Gara,

I am writing to express the support of Friends of Alaska CASA (FAC) for House Bill 126. This bill, as you know, will help foster youth transition more successfully from state care to independent living.

Currently 38% of foster youth aging out of the system end up homeless. This bill attempts to remedy this reality through several assistance measures, such as financial help for rent and other living expenses for up to a year after aging out, and tuition waivers for vocational or college education.

HB 126 will extend the applicability of transportation funding for foster youth so they can stay at the same school for an entire school year instead of transferring between different schools as is often the case. HB 126 will also require a quicker transfer of school records when kids do switch schools, thus easing the discomfort and disruption caused by the change.

Finally, HB 126 attempts to improve basic services within foster care. The most recent federal review of foster care in Alaska gave our state very low marks. HB 126 looks to set the bar higher by requiring the state meet federal once-a-month visit standards. Currently, some youth in care are only seen once every eight months, hardly sufficient to assist a young person with the myriad of difficult issues brought about by their unique circumstances.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sallye Werner
President
Friends of Alaska CASA

Ryan Zinn
Program Director
Friends of Alaska CASA



March 11, 2009

Anchorage School District

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, Alaska 99504-3135
(907) 742-4000

To Members of the House Education Committee:

I am writing in support of CS for HB 126 (EDC) which relates to the education of students who are homeless or in foster care or awaiting foster care. As you know, we have a large and growing homeless population in our district; we also have a large and growing number of students awaiting placement in foster care or who are in foster care. One of the major challenges for these young people is finding stability in their lives, including being able to attend school on a regular basis.

It is a well-known fact that when students stay in the same school for the whole school year, there is more opportunity for the student to be academically successful. The Anchorage School District and School Board have worked for years to help parents understand the importance of keeping their children in the same school as long as possible. In the case of homeless students, and those in foster care or awaiting foster care placement, we feel strongly that we need to follow the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act for homeless students, which requires us to provide transportation to and from the student's original school for the school year. In the case of foster children and those awaiting placement, we support the language in this proposed legislation as long as there is some funding for this requirement. The Anchorage School District provided \$150,000 to supplement federal funding for transportation last year and would anticipate an increase again this year.

I commend Representatives Gara, Crawford, and Kerttula for bringing this legislation forward and hope that you will support its passage.

Please feel free to contact me at comeau_carol@asdk12.org if you have need for more information.

Sincerely yours,

Carol Comeau
Superintendent



**Alaska Native
Tribal Health Consortium**

Administration · 4000 Ambassador Drive · Anchorage, Alaska 99508 · Phone: (907) 729-1900 · Fax: (907) 729-1901 · www.anthc.org

POSITION PAPER

CONTACT: Valerie Davidson, Senior Director
Legal and Intergovernmental Affairs
Through Pat Jackson, State Liaison for Alaska Native Health
523-0363 – pajackson@anthc.org

DATE: April 8, 2009

RE: HB 168 – State certification and designation of trauma centers and creating the uncompensated trauma care fund
HB 169 – Appropriating \$5,000,000 to the uncompensated trauma care fund

POSITION: Support

ANTHC supports HB 168 and HB 169 as important steps in increasing the trauma care capacity in the state.

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) is a tribally controlled, non-profit statewide tribal health organization formed pursuant to federal law to provide a range of medical and community health services for more than 130,000 Alaska Natives. It is part of the Alaska Tribal Health System (ATHS), which is owned and managed by the 231 federally-recognized tribes in Alaska and by their respective regional health organizations.

ANTHC and Southcentral Foundation jointly manage the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC), the tertiary hospital of the ATHS located in Anchorage. ANMC is the only Level II Trauma Center in the Indian Health Service/tribal health system nationally. ANMC is also the only Level II Trauma Center in Alaska. The nearest Level I Trauma Center is in Seattle.

Trauma system development is a public health priority. A comprehensive system of trauma care is an essential part of the public safety net. Regionalized trauma systems based on a network of coordinated Trauma Centers designated at the appropriate level improves health outcomes and reduces costs. ANMC, as the highest level designated Trauma Center in the State of Alaska, is the lynchpin for the state's trauma system, and provides the foundation for continued statewide system development.

Trauma Center designations were created as a way to improve outcomes for patients who face extraordinary medical issues. On balance, early and appropriate medical attention to life-threatening health issues reduces overall length of stay in the hospital and reduced complications for many patients. Without trauma care, the costs of health care for trauma patients will be greater, including trauma patients who are Medicaid eligible.

The cost of providing trauma care at ANMC has more than doubled over the past four years and funding has not kept pace. ANMC's Trauma Center simply cannot be maintained at current revenue levels. If ANMC's Trauma Center designation is discontinued because funding levels have rendered the service unsustainable, the hospital faces reductions in staffing. Diversions of patients to non-tribal providers would increase, and because the federal government reimburses 100% of the cost of services provided for Native clients at Native facilities but a smaller percentage at non-tribal providers, there would be an increased cost to the state's general fund budget.

ANTHC supports HB 168 and HB 169 as important steps by the State to encourage and support appropriate trauma care options for Alaskans. Because we are Alaska's only Level II Trauma Center we recommend removing the language in section (d) on Page 2, Line 11, that limits appropriations to any one facility to 25%.

Thank you for your consideration.

Matthew Johnson

From: butchr@gci.net on behalf of stacey david reay [butchr@gci.net]

Sent: Thursday, April 09, 2009 9:06 AM

To: Rep. Wes Keller

Subject: HB 126

- Mr. Keller: Please schedule a hearing for HB 126. As a licensed social worker who has worked with families involved with Office of Children's Services, I have become aware of the need for additional support for the foster youth aging out of the system. Please help support these kids.
-
- The primary intent with this bill is to help foster youth transition more successfully from state care to independent living. Currently between 30-40% of foster youth aging out of the system end up homeless. This bill attempts to remedy that through several assistance measures, such as financial help for rent and other living expenses for up to a year after aging out, and tuition waivers for vocational or college education.
- The bill also attempts to facilitate better academic success for foster youth, which has long term benefits through the transition out of care and into adulthood. HB126 will extend the applicability of transportation funding for foster youth so they can stay at the same school for an entire school year instead of bouncing around between different schools as is often the case. HB126 will also require a quicker transfer of school records when kids do switch schools, thus easing the discomfort and disruption caused by the change.
- The bill also attempts to improve basic services within foster care. The most recent federal review of foster care in Alaska gave our state very low marks. HB126 tries to set the bar higher by requiring the state meet federal once-a-month visit standards. Currently, some youth in care are only seen once every eight months, and this is hardly enough to know how a youth is coping with the myriad of difficult issues brought about by their unique circumstances.

Sincerely, Stacey David Reay, LCSW, 1941 Rebel Ridge, Anchorage, AK 99504, 907-337-6537

Matthew Johnson

From: Carol Ford [whoville@pobox.alaska.net]
Sent: Monday, April 13, 2009 2:29 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HB 126

Dear Representative Keller,

I am writing today to let you know that I strongly support House Bill 126 which provides for necessary support to foster children making the transition from foster care to full adulthood. By definition, foster children have had many ups and downs in their lives under the best of conditions, and as a mother and an active member of my community in Kenai, I am well aware that the transition from teen to adult is a powerful, difficult, important, exciting and dangerous time for everyone regardless of circumstances. It is not the time for their support system to drop them and leave them to fend for themselves.

My own children are past this time, and still turn to their folks for strength and purpose in times of setbacks and questions. As guardians of these children, the State of Alaska has the privilege and duty to offer them support and guidance and in making the best choices available to these citizens. It'll not only give their lives more potential, but will strengthen our state and our nation now and for the next generations.

I urge you to vote yes on House Bill 126.

Carol Ford

Matthew Johnson

From: Gayle Roth [rothgrk@alaska.net]

Sent: Monday, April 13, 2009 2:12 PM

To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Sharon Cissna; Rep. Lindsey Holmes;
Rep. Bob Herron

Subject: HR 126

I am in favor of HR 126.

As a 47 years resident of the State of Alaska and a CASA, I have concern for the children in foster care and feel this bill addresses some of their needs.

There are too many children in foster care. Let's give them the tools they need so they can make a difference in their own lives.

Respectfully,
Gayle Roth

Matthew Johnson

From: ViedeF97@aol.com
Sent: Monday, April 13, 2009 1:36 PM
To: Rep. Lindsey Holmes; Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: House 126 - strong support for

Representatives-

Please vote to support our foster kids with the benefits this bill will provide. I have been many hours over the years working with children; special needs, homeless and fostered kids there is great need for these kids of services.

Our state of Alaska is one that must do more to help those kids that are having a hard start in life and this is one of those ways. Providing the services that will allow them to transition into 'adulthood' with additional help its critical.

My husband and I, as residents of a 'bush' village are doing more each year to offer support where we can do children in our area.

This particular group of kids covered by this bill could see great benefits from just this small effort.

Please support passage of this bill.

Victoria and Roland Briggs
King Salmon, AK 99613

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Matthew Johnson

From: maryla@alaska.com on behalf of Mary La Fever [maryla@alaska.com]
Sent: Monday, April 13, 2009 1:17 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: House Bill 126

Dear HHSS Committee Member Keller

Just want to let you know I am in SUPPORT of this bill. It seems to me that kids of all economic sectors need all the help we can give them these days, particularly those who are doing without daily.....any boost is helpful, and this bill addresses some important needs.

Thanks for your consideration,

Mary La Fever
41 year resident of Anchorage

Matthew Johnson

From: Britteny Cioni-Haywood [britteny.cioni@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, April 13, 2009 12:08 PM
To: Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. John Coghill; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Sharon Cissna; Rep. Lindsey Holmes
Subject: HB126

Dear Members of the Health and Social Services Committee,

I am writing in support of the HB126 bill that is currently be reviewed and voted on this week. It is my understanding that approximately 40% of Alaska's foster youth end up homeless after coming out of foster care, and less than 10% end up going to college. This is not acceptable and we need to provide more support for those coming out of the foster care system. If we want productive, capable adults then let's help this group overcome the many obstacles that they face. Really the costs of this program will far outweigh the costs of doing nothing and putting this population in greater risk of ending up in the penal system or on social programs that will be much more costly over a lifetime. The loss of economic potential is enormous and we need to help these young adults become productive citizens of our state. Thank you for time and consideration of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Britteny A. Cioni
9093 Fireweed Lane
Juneau, AK 99801

Matthew Johnson

From: m.langdon@gci.net on behalf of Mary Langdon [m.langdon@gci.net]
Sent: Saturday, April 11, 2009 11:02 AM
To: Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. John Coghill; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Sharon Cissna; Rep. Lindsey Holmes
Cc: Rep. Les Gara
Subject: House Bill 126 "Success For Foster Youth"

Dear Representatives~ I am writing to strongly encourage all of you, as members of the House Health and Social Services committee, to vote to pass HB 126. I have read the sponsor statement. I can see only good coming from passing this bill, for individuals and for the State of Alaska.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,
Mary Langdon, M.D.

Matthew Johnson

From: Patricia Abney [abney1@acsalaska.net]
Sent: Saturday, April 11, 2009 10:37 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HB 126

Please support House Bill 126

It is so important that these young people become productive adults and not life long wards of the state.

I think Amanda says it well.

Amanda Metivier, who helped found Alaska's foster care advocacy and education organization, Facing Foster Care in Alaska, notes the effort aims to:

“create opportunities for young people who age-out of foster care to succeed in their adult lives by providing job training, higher education, housing assistance, and school stability. It gives hope to foster youth who have limited supports and resources after leaving custody.”

Sincerely,

Pat Abney

Matthew Johnson

From: Friedman_Jeff [Friedman_Jeff@asdk12.org]
Sent: Friday, April 10, 2009 9:28 AM
To: Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. John Coghill; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Paul Seaton;
Rep. Sharon Cissna; Rep. Lindsey Holmes
Cc: Rep. Les Gara; Comeau_Carol; Siegfried_Robin
Subject: HB 126 Homeless Students

Dear Co-Chairs Herron and Keller, and Committee Members:

I am writing about CSHB 126 which will be heard by the House Health and Social Services Committee on Tuesday.

The Anchorage School District continues to support this bill, but some of the changes made by the Committee Substitute raise concerns.

1. The Committee Substitute added a provision requiring transportation during summer school. In the past, we have not provided transportation during summer school except for some of our Title I schools. Not all homeless students have a Title I school as their school of origin. In addition, not all schools of origin will be open during summer school. On its face, this language would require us to transport a homeless student to his or her school of origin even if the school of origin was closed for the summer.

Keeping a student in their school of origin during the regular school year is important. Keeping a student in the same school is less important during summer school because the teachers are different, the students in the school are different, and the curriculum is different. I ask that this new requirement be removed from the bill.

2. The Committee Substitute also removed a provision that currently exists in law and was in the original bill. That provision allowed for a waiver of the transportation requirement if the Superintendent found, in writing, that attending a different school was in the child's best interest. An example of when this waiver might be used is when a homeless child is living with relatives and the homeless student might be better off attending school with the other children in that household. A waiver could also be useful in a district like Kenai where it might not be in the student's best interest to be transported from Seward to the student's school of origin in Homer each day. Please re-insert the waiver provision that was in the original bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jeff Friedman
Anchorage School Board
1534 D Street
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-742-4699 (Home)

Matthew Johnson

From: Friedman_Jeff [Friedman_Jeff@asdk12.org]
Sent: Friday, April 10, 2009 5:55 PM
To: Friedman_Jeff; Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. John Coghill; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Sharon Cissna; Rep. Lindsey Holmes
Cc: Rep. Les Gara; Comeau_Carol; Siegfried_Robin; Sen. Bettye Davis
Subject: RE: HB 126 Homeless Students

Follow Up Flag: Follow Up
Flag Status: Red

I have received new information about this bill and wish to clarify my earlier e-mail. I have learned that a C version will be introduced that will eliminate the second concern listed below. In addition, I have learned from the sponsor that the reference to summer school is expected to be removed before this bill is finalized. With this new information, I can say that I fully support HB 126 and urge you to move it out of committee with a favorable recommendation. I apologize for any confusion my initial e-mail may have caused.

Jeff Friedman
Anchorage School Board
1534 D Street
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-742-4699 (Home)

From: Friedman_Jeff
Sent: Friday, April 10, 2009 9:27 AM
To: Representative_bob_herron@legis.state.ak.us;
Representative_wes_keller@legis.state.ak.us;
Representative_john_coghill@legis.state.ak.us; representative_bob_lynn@legis.state.ak.us;
representative_paul_seaton@legis.state.ak.us;
representative_sharon_cissna@legis.state.ak.us;
representative_lindsey_holmes@legis.state.ak.us
Cc: representative_les_gara@legis.state.ak.us; Comeau_Carol; Siegfried_Robin
Subject: HB 126 Homeless Students

Dear Co-Chairs Herron and Keller, and Committee Members:

I am writing about CSHB 126 which will be heard by the House Health and Social Services Committee on Tuesday.

The Anchorage School District continues to support this bill, but some of the changes made by the Committee Substitute raise concerns.

1. The Committee Substitute added a provision requiring transportation during summer school. In the past, we have not provided transportation during summer school except for some of our Title I schools. Not all homeless students have a Title I school as their school of origin. In addition, not all schools of origin will be open during summer school. On its face, this language would require us to transport a homeless student to his or her school of origin even if the school of origin was closed for the summer.

Keeping a student in their school of origin during the regular school year is important. Keeping a student in the same school is less important during summer school because the teachers are different, the students in the school are different, and the curriculum is different. I ask that this new requirement be removed from the bill.

2. The Committee Substitute also removed a provision that currently exists in law and was in the original bill. That provision allowed for a waiver of the transportation requirement if the Superintendent found, in writing, that attending a different school was in the child's best interest. An example of when this waiver might be used is when a homeless child is living with relatives and the homeless student might be better off attending school with the other children in that household. A waiver could also be useful

in a district like Kenai where it might not be in the student's best interest to be transported from Seward to the student's school of origin in Homer each day. Please reinsert the waiver provision that was in the original bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jeff Friedman
Anchorage School Board
1534 D Street
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-742-4699 (Home)

Matthew Johnson

From: David-----Mikell [alaskamd@yahoo.com]
Sent: Saturday, April 11, 2009 7:57 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HB 126

As a former foster parent and high school teacher of many teenagers in foster care, I STRONGLY urge you to support the passage of HB 126. Our teenagers need more than the resources and assistance that are currently available to them in order to successfully transition from foster care to independent adulthood.

Thank you,
Mikell L. Murphy, Ed.D
2053 Cliffside Dr.
Anchorage, AK 999501