



COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION of New York State

**MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT**

S.5419-B/A.1777-B

***The Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS) urges New York's legislature to pass legislation to strengthen the child welfare preventive housing subsidy to reflect increased housing costs and better address the needs of youth and families involved in the child welfare system.***

CHCANYS strongly supports S.5419-B/A.1777-B to amend the Social Services Law (SSL) to 1) update the value of rent subsidies available to families involved in the child welfare system and youth exiting the child welfare system from \$300 to \$725, including annual increases based on calculations tied to inflation, and 2) extend the upper age limit that a young person exiting foster care can receive the benefit to 24, allowing youth who must leave foster care ("age out") at 21 to avail themselves of the subsidy when they are transitioning to independent living – exactly when they need it most.

As New York's primary care association for federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), CHCANYS knows housing is critical to family stability and safety, and the child welfare housing subsidy is a vital support to families for whom unstable housing is a driving factor in their involvement in the child welfare system. The goal of the child welfare housing subsidy program is to stabilize housing for families and prevent child removals, expedite reunification of children in foster care, and help youth aging out of foster care who face high risk of housing instability and homelessness.

Under the existing program, families with open child protective services investigations, families receiving preventive services, families where children are reunifying from foster care, and youth ages 18 through 21 are eligible for the housing subsidy through their local department of social services (LDSS). LDSSs are authorized to provide eligible families and youth with a housing subsidy of up to \$300 per month for up to three years or until reaching the limit of \$10,800. The housing subsidy program is a mandated prevention service intended to keep children out of foster care or to expedite discharge from foster care. It is on a menu of critical preventive services authorized under SSL 409, and fully funded in the recently passed state budget.

The housing subsidy amount has not changed since the housing subsidy was created in 1988 (although the law was amended in 2019 to clarify that the subsidy can be used by families and youth living with roommates). With housing costs having nearly [tripled](#) since 1988, the low subsidy amount has rendered the subsidy largely ineffective at achieving its intended purpose of helping stabilize the housing of families and enabling young adults to transition from foster care to independence. S.5419-B/A.1777-B increases the subsidy from \$300 to \$725 per month (with \$725 being the 2022 [equivalent](#) of \$300), includes an annual increase using calculations tied to inflation, and extends the upper age limit for youth aging out of foster care to 24.

This subsidy is more critical now than any time in the recent past. Families face [significant financial and housing precarity because of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis](#). As of June 2021, [7,175](#) of New York's children lost a parent or guardian to COVID-19—that is nearly two out of every 1,000 children. Black and Latinx children experienced the death of a parent or caregiver at [twice](#) the rate of white children, and over half of all children who experienced a death like this live in New York City. Poverty – the major driver of child welfare system involvement – has deepened for many of New York's families. Strengthening this subsidy is critical to helping families remain housed now. This is also critical for youth



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leaving foster care. Based on national research conducted in 2020, about a [third](#) of transition age youth were living in their own apartment or house. According to a survey of current and former youth involved in the child welfare system completed in early 2021, [25%](#) of respondents were facing or fearing housing instability.

Codifying these updates to the subsidy is also important because much of the federal pandemic economic supports, including emergency payments and rental protections, ended in 2021. For families facing potential contact with New York's child welfare system, those preparing for reunification with their children, and for transition-age youth living independently, this legislation is a much-needed updating of a critical preventive service.

By passing this piece of legislation, New York has the opportunity to strengthen its housing subsidy program so that more youth and families may find stability and independence through housing.

Fiscal impact: None. This housing benefit is part of the existing appropriation each County receives as part of child welfare preventive services, so the legislation simply permits local departments of social services to use more of this existing pot of funding for housing stability under this existing program.

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