



June 25, 2025

Re: Hearing on “Aging Out is Not a Plan: Reimagining Futures for Foster Youth”

Submitted by: Allison Green, Chief Legal Officer, National Association of Counsel for Children, 899 North Logan Street, Suite 208, Denver, Colorado, 80203

Dear Committee Members:

The [National Association of Counsel for Children](#) (NACC) respectfully submits this written comment following the June 12, 2025, hearing on “Aging Out is Not a Plan: Reimagining Futures for Foster Youth.” NACC represents a national membership community of attorneys who advocate in child welfare courts on behalf of children, parents, kin, and agencies. Through their daily work, they see firsthand the challenges older youth face as they age out of foster care.¹

Thank you to the many Committee Members and staff who coordinated this hearing on such a critical topic. As witness Lisa Guillette of Foster Forward explained, “Too often, youth aging out of foster care are treated as an afterthought, expected to navigate adult responsibilities without the preparation, resources, or relationships their peers rely on.” Indeed, during the hearing, a key theme emerged: although there are some very useful laws already in place, they are all but impossible to access for youth stuck in a labyrinthine bureaucracy that does not give them sufficient notice, information, or opportunity.

For this reason, it is imperative to guarantee youth access to legal representation in the context of their TAY experience. Attorneys for children and youth prevent aging out to begin with [by identifying and accelerating permanency options](#). For older youth who do remain in the system, attorneys ensure they can access Chafee services and other resources to which they are entitled. However, [13 states still do not require legal counsel for youth](#). That is why Congress must urgently work to ensure access to [legal counsel for youth](#) and parents experiencing foster care court proceedings. This proposal enjoys bipartisan support, is backed by a strong body of research, has funding in place, and is necessary to protect the futures of youth in foster care.

Bipartisan Support – this issue has already been championed by leaders from both parties.

- During President Trump’s first administration, HHS [changed long-standing administrative policy](#) to open federal funding for children’s and parent’s attorneys and [released important guidance](#) to the field to support implementation. [Executive Order 13930](#) further affirmed the President’s commitment to this issue. More recently, the [America First Policy Institute](#) has affirmed its unequivocal support for client-directed representation for foster youth.
- Likewise, under President Biden’s, HHS consistently promoted the importance of legal representation, citing it as [a strategic priority](#) and [providing relevant testimony](#) to the Senate

¹ NACC’s national advocacy is guided by our 2023 [Policy Framework](#), which was shaped by our staff, Board of Directors, members and lived experience [Advisory Council](#).

Judiciary Committee. Last year, HHS [finalized a regulation](#) that codified the funding for legal counsel originally opened during the prior administration.

- Similarly, in Congress, leaders from both parties have come together on this issue. In June 2021, the Senate HELP Committee unanimously [voted in favor](#) of a proposal that would have embedded a legal representation mandate in law. The proposal had [broad national support from across the country](#) as well. More recently, [H.R. 8810](#) in the 118th Congress was another strong example of the bipartisan consensus around legal representation.

Backed by Research – research shows that legal representation for children and parents helps child welfare state agencies meet their mandate.

- For example, A [2021 study from Washington State](#) found that, compared to children without attorneys, children receiving standards-based legal representation were 45% more likely to reunify, 30% less likely to change foster homes, and 65% less likely to experience unnecessary school moves. Unsurprisingly, all this saved taxpayer dollars – a total of \$1.2 million in net savings for the cohort studied. This is just one [of many studies](#) confirming the impressive impact of counsel for kids.

Funding in Place – Child welfare legal representation enjoys funding through Title IV-E and other federal resources.

- The Ways and Means Committee could address legal representation through Title IV-E of the Social Act, a child welfare funding stream that, like Chafee, falls under its purview. [Title IV-E dollars already fund](#) the critical work of children’s and parents legal counsel, making this a logical statutory vehicle for reform.
- In addition to Title IV-E, other federal funding streams support child welfare legal representation across the country. These include Social Services Block Grants, State Opioid Response Grants, the Victims of Crime Act, [and more](#).

Necessary to Make Chafee Work - At every juncture, youth require effective legal counsel to advise them of TAY-specific rights and to hold state governments accountable for responsible stewardship of Chafee resources.

- Lawyers help their clients access the myriad of benefits available under Chafee, such as housing and Education and Training Vouchers. For example, lawyers at Children’s Law Center of Minnesota [fought successfully](#) to ensure their client, Steve, could access transitional living and job training after his 18th birthday. Similarly, lawyers at Children’s Law Center of DC [helped Tala access financial aid](#) for college.

I invite you to review our [Policymaker’s Guide to Counsel for Kids](#) and **would greatly appreciate the opportunity to brief you further on the legal needs of transition-aged youth.** Please let me know if you might be available for a meeting, or if there is further information I can provide. Thank you for your dedication to children, families, and the child welfare workforce in your jurisdiction and nationwide.

Sincerely,



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