



February 12, 2009

Greetings Chairman Ogden, Senate Finance Committee members:

I am here today on behalf of the Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) to talk to you about something we believe should be a funding priority: the transition centers that serve youth transitioning to independence after foster care.

A transition center is a single location where foster youth can go to get the full range of services they need to help them make a successful transition from foster care to independence. Examples of these services include case management, education planning, employment services, skill building, housing, and mentoring. There are 10 transition centers in Texas, and they are currently supported by a hodgepodge of resources, most of which are "seed money," from sources including the Texas Workforce Commission and the Casey Family Programs Foundation. Since much of this money is seed money, we are hearing that for many of these programs, it is only a matter of time before it runs out.

We know that 1 in 4 foster youth will be incarcerated within their first 2 years of leaving the foster care system, more than 1 in 5 former foster youth have experienced homelessness after leaving foster care, and half of all foster youth will not have a high school diploma by age 19. These statistics are a clear indication that foster youth need more support than they're currently getting, after they leave care. Transition center services fill that big gap for former foster youth, to prevent them from experiencing these negative outcomes and help them attain self-sufficiency.

Because the Department of Family and Protective Services recognizes the value of transition centers to youth in foster care, the agency has requested \$200,000 in one-time funds to be used as seed money to open transition centers in 8 additional communities in our state. While we agree that new centers are needed, we believe that existing transition centers have an even more urgent need for some stable base funding, to ensure their survival.

Since the existing transition centers each have unique circumstances and funding needs, we feel the best way for the state to provide this stability to existing transition centers is through a competitive RFP process. We are recommending that the committee consider an appropriation of \$1 million, rather than \$200,000, for this purpose.

Thank you,

Christine Gendron
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