



Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) 516 West Lookerman St., Dover, DE 19904
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 13, 2013

TO: The Honorable Members of the Delaware General Assembly

FROM: Terri Hancharick, Chairperson
GACEC

RE: House Bill No. 163 (Transitional Foster Care Supports)

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed House Bill No. 163 on Transitional Foster Care Supports. Council **strongly endorses** this very important legislation.

As background, House Joint Resolution (HJR) 18 from the 146th General Assembly resulted in an assessment of problems experienced by youth transitioning from foster care. The final 50-page report was issued in September, 2012 and is available at <http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/12527>. As the preamble to House Bill No. 163 recites, individuals transitioning from foster care at age 18 are at high risk. The following statistics are highlighted: 1) 82% of males are arrested by age 21; 2) 22% become homeless; and 3) females remaining in care to age 21 had a 38% reduction in the incidence of pregnancy before age 20.

House Bill No. 18 implements the recommendations in the report. Existing law (lines 46 - 50) already permits the Family Court to extend services to youth in the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families (DSCY&F) custody to age 21. The legislation requires DSCY&F to "create and maintain a developmentally appropriate, comprehensive program that fully integrates independent living services from ages 14 to 21 that will assist youth with their successful transition into adulthood (lines 94-96, 160-163). The bill contemplates the provision of enhanced independent living services to promote financial stability, housing supports, medical supports, employment and training, education, and connection to resources.

There is a high prevalence of disability among youth in foster care. Indeed, the preamble (lines 14-15) recites that many youth aging out of the foster care system "reported lifetime prevalence of Post-Traumatic-Stress Disorder similar to that of many U.S. war veterans". Council fully supports this legislation that will assist with transitioning and impact so many individuals in the disability community.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration of our position. Please feel free to contact me or Wendy Strauss should you have questions or concerns.