



TESTIMONY TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

HB 774: Human Services - Universal Basic Income for Transition-Age Youth - Establishment

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng, President

DATE: March 10, 2022

The League of Women Voters supports **House Bill 774: Universal Basic Income for Transition-Age Youth**, as it will help ensure the well-being of young people who age out of Maryland's foster care system at age 21 and transition to independence and adulthood. **It will provide them with a guaranteed basic income of \$1,000 per month for the first three years they're on their own to help meet their basic needs.**

The League of Women Voters first developed their *Statement of Position on Meeting Basic Human Needs* in 1989, maintaining that persons "**whose earnings are inadequate...have the right to an income and/or services sufficient to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, and access to health care.**" And in 1990, as a member of the Low Income Housing Coalition's Women and Housing Task Force, the League endorsed a set of recommendations to Congress predicated on the conviction that **every person should have decent, safe, and affordable housing.**

Many young people age 21-24 rely on their families for financial help and housing. Families can provide support as their children ease into adulthood by enabling them, for example, to live at home while completing their education or job training, or by helping with transportation and other needs. This can give them the opportunity to mature and gain life experience while remaining safe.

But young people aging out of the foster care system have few such family supports. As state support abruptly ends on their 21st birthday, they are suddenly expected to be self-sufficient, and be able to pay for housing, food, transportation, phone service, and clothing on their own.

These young people can struggle greatly during this very difficult transition period.

Per a University of Maryland School of Social Work July 2019 study: **Youth Homelessness Among Foster Care Alumni:**

Transition age youth face a disproportionate risk of drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues, economic instability, criminal justice involvement, becoming young parents, and future homelessness...

Children and youth with a history of foster care involvement have a disproportionate risk of mental health and behavioral health disorders compared to their peers....

*Maryland surveys of foster care alumni revealed that youth exiting foster care often had secure housing for the first three months... but **the majority soon became unable to manage rent, resulting in 100% who had experienced or were currently experiencing housing instability, and 99% who had stayed in emergency shelters since exiting foster care within 6 months of leaving care.** These findings reflect previous research, which has shown that **youth with a history of foster care are more likely to experience homelessness at an early age, and to remain homeless for a longer period of time.***

The guaranteed income in this bill will help prevent some of that instability. It will bridge the wide gap between foster care and self-sufficiency, helping these vulnerable transition-age youths better meet their basic needs as they learn to become independent adults.

The League urges the committee to give a favorable report to HOUSE BILL 774.