



The Foster Youth Mentoring Act Sponsored by Rep. Karen Bass (CA-37)

Background and Issue

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that there are over 400,000 children currently in foster care in the United States. Youth in foster care face many challenges including disruptions in education, stable and permanent familial connections and personal relationships with consistent caring adults who provide them emotional and professional support. 50% of foster youth complete high school by the time they are 18 years old, 20% graduate high school and enroll in higher education, but only between 2-9% obtain a bachelor's degree. Foster youth need caring adults in their lives to be advocates for them throughout educational, personal and professional challenges and to help many of them transition out of foster care back to their families, into their new adoptive families or for many youth as they "age-out" of foster care. Youth in mentoring programs are likely to have fewer absences in school, less drug and alcohol abuse and improved relationships with adults. These evidence-based mentoring practices could greatly improve positive outcomes for foster youth as they benefit from the positive relationships they form with mentors.

Bill Summary

The Foster Youth Mentoring Act seeks to address the need for greater support of mentoring programs that serve youth in foster care. Foster youth face challenges as they navigate growing up often without the support of consistent caring adult. The Foster Youth Mentoring Act seeks to fill that gap to provide foster youth with the social capital, resources and support they need to develop positive relationships and connections.

The bill connects youth in foster care with adult volunteer mentors by providing support for mentoring programs for foster youth. The bill would:

- Authorize funding to provide support to mentoring programs that serve foster youth. Programs would be eligible to receive funds to support the expansion of their services to more youth in foster care and to improve services for current foster youth in their programs.
- Ensures that mentoring programs participating in the grant program are currently engaged or developing quality mentoring standards to ensure best practices in the screening of volunteers, matching process and successful mentoring relationships.
- Provide intensive training to adult volunteers who serve as mentors to foster youth to assure that they are competent in understanding child development, family dynamics, the child welfare system and other relevant systems that affect foster youth.
- Increase coordination between mentoring programs and statewide child welfare systems by supporting the expansion of mentoring services for foster youth.

In addition, the bill would require the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a report to Congress that includes the number of youth served by the grant awards and measure educational and social outcomes of the youth in those mentoring programs.

For More Information

Contact Adriane Alicea at AAlicea@mentoring.org or 202-688-4738