



## **The Foster Youth Mentoring Act of 2021**

### **Sponsored by Co-Chairs of the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth**

Rep. Karen Bass (CA-37), Rep. Don Bacon (NE-02)  
Rep. Brenda Lawrence (MI-14), Rep. Jim Langevin (RI-2),  
and Rep. Markwayne Mullin (OK-2)

#### **Background and Issue**

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services there are over 400,000 children currently in foster care in the United States. Youth with experience in foster care face many challenges, including disruptions in education and a lack of stable and permanent housing that can make it difficult to maintain strong relationships. Only 50% of youth in foster care complete high school by the time they are 18 years old, and only 20% enroll in higher education upon graduation. Studies prove that mentoring services for foster youth are effective interventions that have a positive impact on a wide range of protective factors including improved mental health, educational functioning and attainment, peer relationships, placement outcomes, and life satisfaction. Additional research demonstrates that mentoring at the time of emancipation from foster care can have a positive impact on transition-related outcomes such as employment, housing stability, and avoiding involvement in the criminal justice system. Mentorship is an evidence-based innovative practice with proven outcomes that can result in a meaningful improvement in people's lives and substantial cost savings for the child welfare system when implemented at scale.

#### **Bill Summary**

Mentoring programs that serve children with adverse childhood experiences, such as youth in foster care, require about double the resources per youth than general community-based mentorship programs. The Foster Youth Mentoring Act seeks to address the greater need for critical programs that support our country's most vulnerable young people. The Foster Youth Mentoring Act creates a competitive federal grant program to provide foster youth with healthy volunteer and peer mentor relationships.

Specifically, the bill would:

- Authorize \$50 million to expand and enhance mentoring programs that serve foster youth and former foster youth.
- Provide intensive training to volunteers who serve as mentors to foster youth ensuring a strong understanding of child development, family dynamics, the child welfare system, education, and other relevant considerations that affect foster youth.
- Ensure that youth voice is included in program development, design, and implementation.
- Provide funding to support peer-to-peer mentoring relationships for young people with experience in foster care.
- Ensure that programs receiving a grant follow best practices for screening volunteers and matching mentors with mentees.
- Increase coordination between mentoring programs and child welfare systems.

#### **Become a Co-Sponsor**

This bill is supported by the [Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth](#) and the [Youth Mentoring Caucus](#). To become a co-sponsor, please complete [THIS FORM](#). For questions or bill text please contact Heather Zenone at [Heather.zenone@mail.house.gov](mailto:Heather.zenone@mail.house.gov) in the office of Rep. Karen Bass or Rachel Pearce at [Rachel.pearce@mail.house.gov](mailto:Rachel.pearce@mail.house.gov) in the office of Rep. Don Bacon.