



June 12, 2017

The Honorable John Faso
1616 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Karen Bass
2241 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

Dear Congressman Faso and Congresswoman Bass:

The Child Welfare League of America offers its endorsement for HR 2847, Improving Services for Older Youth in Foster Care Act. We hope that this bill will encourage more states to extend foster care to 21 and to take additional actions to better assist transitioning youth.

As you know with support from key leaders like yourselves we have made some progress over the past decade in reducing the number of young people exiting foster care without a permanent family. Despite this progress there are still nearly 21,000 young people who will emancipate from foster care this year. Beyond these numbers are countless other figures not counted here that indicate that youth in foster care overwhelmingly do not attend college or even complete high school.

As a country, we have taken significant strides in reducing the nation's foster care numbers in this century. Foster care caseloads stood at 568,000 in 1999. During these past two decades, in part because of congressional support, the number of children and youth in foster care decreased to 397,000 by 2012. In turn, the number of youth emancipating has also decreased.

Last year's foster care numbers released by HHS indicated that in 2015, 427,910 children were in foster care, an eight-percent increase since 2012. New data suggests that drug abuse by the parent was the primary reason for the child's removal in 32 percent of cases. We are concerned that trends that move the overall foster care population will also mean increased youth aging out of care.

We need to take all the actions possible now to prevent this. Your legislation is an important step in that direction.

Again, thank you for your support and interest in this issue we hope we can continue to come together around some important federal investments and reforms in child welfare.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine James Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris James-Brown
President and CEO