

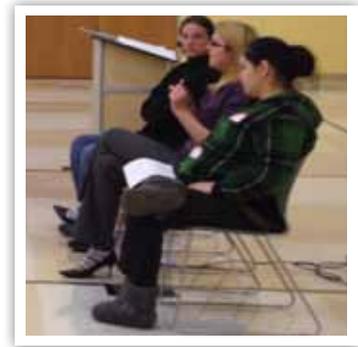
True Up Youth To Speak Out at Children’s Advocacy Day

Members of True Up’s Youth Advisory Council will speak out for changes in state programs for foster youth at Children’s Advocacy Day in Frankfort Feb. 16.

True Up supporters will join forces with Kentucky Youth Advocates and other child welfare supporters at the rally at the state Capitol. Youth will also meet with lawmakers and talk with leaders of Gov. Steve Beshear’s administration.

For several months, more than a dozen members of the youth council have been meeting to identify needed changes that would allow more foster youth to become successful, self-sufficient adults. The group narrowed their focus on three major areas:

- Changing state policies and laws to encourage more foster youth turning 18 to remain in state care to continue their education and make the transition to self-sufficiency.
- Extending Medicaid coverage beyond age 19.
- Expanding tuition support for foster youth beyond state universities to private, out-of-state and vocational schools.



At an Appreciation Reception at the Home of the Innocents on Feb. 9, three Youth Advisory Council members testified about those priorities to a group of more than 50 foster youth supporters. William Wells, Ellin Ortwein and Chelsea Hoover delivered persuasive arguments and personal stories supporting the need for changes.

Dr. Gene Foster, True Up’s interim executive director, praised the youth leaders for their commitment to make changes that will benefit other foster youth who face similar challenges. Foster also complimented Kentucky Youth Advocates for their partnership in providing advocacy training for True Up youth.

Frank Harshaw, founder and chairman of True Up, told the group that “education is the force to end the cycle of poverty” for foster youth. The changes identified by the youth council will help increase the rate of success for foster youth and result in more educated, independent adults, Harshaw said.

Foster and Harshaw also introduced a new member of the True Up team, Belinda Gates, who will lead efforts to develop an experience-based curriculum of life skills training to help foster youth in areas such as financial management, career mapping and relationship building.

