

## **Gov. Beshear signs legislation to enhance support for foster children**

*Offers additional stability in their lives as they enter adulthood*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 30, 2012) – Governor Steve Beshear, joined by Sen. Ken Winters, children’s advocates and former foster youths, today signed a bill that will enhance protections and support for foster children as they transition to adulthood.

“These are some of our most vulnerable kids – those who are moving from state-sponsored care to the responsibility of adulthood, and we must give them the best chance for a successful transition,” Gov. Beshear said. “In my administration, we have supported legislation to improve the lives of Kentucky children, and this is no different. Kentucky must lend a helping hand to these young people, especially at such a critical juncture in their lives.”

Senate Bill 213, sponsored by Sen. Ken Winters, of Murray, gives youth in state-sponsored foster care an additional six months to seek to continue receiving benefits. Currently, state support for foster children ends when they turn 18, but youth can request to extend or reinstate support to help them make the transition to independent living before reaching the age of 18½.

The legislation gives foster youth more time, until the age of 19, to decide whether to extend support, ultimately affording them additional stability in their living situation and overall health and well-being.

The new law also provides more information and support from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services to help teens as they consider their options regarding the transitional living support services that are available to them through age 21.

Youths can request a transition plan that includes specific options on housing; health insurance; education; local opportunities for mentors and continuing support services; and work force supports and employment services, under the legislation.

The legislation was the idea of former foster youths who are part of a nonprofit group called True Up, a youth-driven movement to help young people in foster care become successful, independent adults.

“Good things can happen when adults listen to kids,” said Chelsea Hoover, leader in True Up and a 19-year-old student at Jefferson Community and Technical College. “Because our leaders in Frankfort listened to us, more foster youth will make better decisions about continuing their education and succeeding on their own.”

“There are so many well-meaning foster kids who want to do well and just do not know how,” said Sen. Winters. “It is my hope that SB 213 will provide a new lease on the rest of their lives.

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