

True Up legislation filed in Kentucky General Assembly

SB 213 gives foster youth more time, information to continue education and support

Kentucky lawmakers are responding to the rising voice of foster youth and True Up with legislation that would give foster youth more time and information to decide about continuing their education and state-sponsored support.

Senate Bill 213, sponsored by Sen. Ken Winters, R-Murray, would extend the window for foster youth to petition the court to continue in state care from six months to one year following the youth's 18th birthday.

The bill also better ensures that foster care youth understand their choices at age 18, have adequate opportunity to access the transitional living support services, and are able to initiate the process themselves.

SB 213, which was filed March 5, would eliminate the negative name for extending care, currently called "recommitting," and replace it with the more descriptive and accurate title, "Transitional Living Support."

True Up youth and alumni voiced the need for this important change in state law during Children's Advocacy Day last month, and legislators have responded to that request, said Dr. Eugene Foster, interim executive director of True Up.

"Senator Winters heard the stories of foster youth and was spurred to action by the obvious need," Foster said. "We will share those stories with other lawmakers who can help us create independence through education for more foster youth."

You can help provide support for SB 213 by contacting your state senator and representative today and asking them to pass this important legislation. Go to www.lrc.ky.gov to find contact information for your lawmaker.

To read SB 213, go to <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/12RS/SB213.htm>

Here are several key reasons why lawmakers should support SB 213:

- Kentucky's current system puts too few foster care youth on the path to a college education and self-sufficiency after they exit the care of the state. This leaves too many stuck in poverty without the help they need to succeed.

- The current system discourages foster care youth from continuing in state care beyond 18 and makes it difficult, if not impossible, for youth to get the help they need if they decide later to pursue higher education and career assistance.
- Foster care youth who have left state care often report they were unaware of the consequences of choosing to opt out of state care and underestimated the challenges of becoming independent without a gradual transition from state-sponsored care.
- Becoming completely independent without support is not something that is expected of most 18 year olds, although this is the reality that many youth who have exited foster care face as they turn 18.