



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**OFFICE OF THE FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN**

6720 FORT DENT WAY, SUITE 240  
TUKWILA, WA 98188  
(206) 439-3870 • (800) 571-7321 • FAX (206) 439-3877

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON ESHB 2592

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Thursday, February 16, 2012

Senate Hearing Room 1, J.A. Cherberg Building, 10:00a.m.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on Substitute House Bill 2592. My name is Patrick Dowd and I am with the Family & Children's Ombudsman ("OFCO"). While OFCO remains neutral on specific proposed legislation, I support the intent of this legislation to extend foster care services to age 21 for youth who are pursuing secondary, post secondary or vocational education.

Each year approximately 400-500 foster youth turn eighteen years old and "age out" of our foster care system. Many of these youth lack basic services to successfully transition into adulthood.

Studies of youth who leave foster care without a safe, permanent family reveal negative life outcomes.<sup>1</sup> For example:

- 25 percent of youth who aged out of foster care did not have a high school diploma or GED.
- Less than 2 percent finished college compared with 23 percent of youth in the general population.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Fostering Connections, Analysis No. 1*, McCoy-Roth, Freundlich and Ross, Jan. 31, 2010. Available at: [http://www.fosteringconnections.org/tools/assets/files/Connections\\_Agingout.pdf](http://www.fosteringconnections.org/tools/assets/files/Connections_Agingout.pdf)

- Over half of youth who aged out of foster care experienced one or more episodes of homelessness, and nearly 30 percent were incarcerated at some point.
- Youth who aged out of foster care were less likely to be employed or to have health insurance than were their peers who had not been in foster care.

These negative experiences compromise these young adults' abilities to lead independent, fulfilling and productive lives and create substantial costs for government.

ESHB 2592 is essential to provide basic care and stability necessary for a foster youth to pursue postsecondary education until he or she turns 21 years of age. This program will prepare these youth for early adulthood and improve their chances for success.

To ensure that eligible foster youth have an opportunity to take advantage of extended foster care, the court would be required to inquire whether the dependent youth has been informed about extended foster care and the dismissal of a dependency would be postponed for six months after the youth turns eighteen.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our written testimony on this legislation