

AB 1615

Former Foster Youth Housing

Assemblymember
Phil Ting
19TH DISTRICT



SUMMARY

California is home to the largest population of foster youth in the nation, serving nearly 60,000 children and youth. Each year, nearly 3,500 of these youth “age out” of the system, left to navigate an increasingly unaffordable housing market with limited financial aid and support. While California has invested in programs to assist former foster youth, these programs do not have the capacity to ensure all of these youth make a transition into safe, stable housing.

This bill would increase housing options for transition age former foster youth by expanding the eligibility and program duration for existing housing programs.

BACKGROUND

California provides supportive housing to foster youth who age out of the system through the Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP-Plus) and specialized federal Housing Choice Vouchers.

The Legislature established THP-Plus in 2001, which provides affordable housing and supportive services to more than 1,300 former foster youth age 18 through 23, for up to 24 months. Of those who are served, half participate for the full program duration, and/or reach the program’s upper age limit. Youth who no longer meet the eligibility criteria often require additional assistance and are at risk of homelessness as they transition out of the program.

In addition to THP-Plus, former foster youth ages 18 through 24 are eligible for one of two federal housing vouchers: the Family Unification Program (FUP) and the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative (FYI). These voucher programs provide former foster youth with wraparound supportive services in addition to helping them secure housing. While the FUP and FYI vouchers offer an opportunity to leverage federal funding, many counties report obstacles in utilizing this resource. Specifically, some counties do not request vouchers or request few because they know they cannot offer the required supportive services

without a dedicated funding source. California’s Housing Navigators Program (HNP) provides an opportunity to address this issue.

HNP was established in 2019 to provide housing navigation and maintenance services to youth ages 18 through 21. Some counties are using their HNP funding to provide housing navigation to youth with FUP and FYI vouchers, however, once a youth turns 22 they are no longer eligible to be served by HNP. Many youth require intensive housing search assistance to utilize the FUP and FYI vouchers and this misaligned age limit not only impacts a county’s ability to maximize this resource but puts youth at risk of homelessness as they navigate the voucher process without support.

THIS BILL

To ensure former foster can transition into safe, stable housing options, and the State can maximize federal housing assistance for foster youth, AB 1615 expands eligibility and matches federal program requirements by:

1. Lengthening the duration of the THP-Plus program from 24 to 36 months and the upper age limit from 23 to 24 for all youth participating in the program.
2. Increasing the upper age limit for the Housing Navigators Program to 24 and changing the name of the program to the Housing Navigation and Maintenance program.

SUPPORT

John Burton Advocates for Youth (Co-Sponsor)
California Alliance of Child and Family Services (Co-Sponsor)

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