



AN ACT ESTABLISHING A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

[S.107](#) Sen. Comerford / [H.235](#) Rep. Finn

Removed from their biological families, the Commonwealth has taken responsibility for the wellbeing of youth in foster care. This bill codifies and expands rights of the youth to ensure the healthiest, most ethical provision of care, mitigating trauma as much as possible, and helping youth enter adulthood with the support and resources they need to thrive. Highlights include the rights to:

Safety and Security

- Not be discriminated against for any reason.
- Placed in safe, nurturing environments with appropriate care and treatment in the least restrictive settings.
- Receive age-appropriate information regarding placements in advance and meet foster parent or program staff beforehand whenever possible.
- Safe access to personal possessions and space.

Connections to Family, Community, and Identify

- Prioritization of placement with family members and siblings.
- Maintenance of positive family time.
- Know and develop racial, cultural, linguistic, gender, religious, and ethnic identities.
- Placements according to child's gender identity and privacy concerning child's sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Inclusion as family in foster families.

Health Care and Accessibility

- Access appropriate, timely medical, reproductive, gender-affirming care, dental, vision, mental and behavioral health services.
- Discuss concerns and questions regarding medications, purpose, and side effects.
- Accessible environments with reasonable accommodations for any disability.

Education, Employment, and Social Connections

- Educational stability and right to stay at school of origin.
- School, extracurricular, religious, cultural, linguistic, ethnic and social activities aligned with prudent parenting.

Resources and Supports

- Reasonable reunification efforts.
- Reasonable access to a caseworker.
- Informed of family visitation plans, permanency goals, and other info. and review/signature of children 14+, as well as inclusion in meetings/hearings.
- Access files at age 18.
- Meaningful contact with their attorney.

Transition Age Youth

- Begin transition planning at age 14, e.g., housing, employment, ed. and health.
- Collaboration with DCF to plan their transition from foster care to adulthood.
- Awareness of right to leave or re-enter receiving state services until age 23 and resources available, e.g., housing, educational and vocational supports.