



## BUDGET ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

**The Commonwealth is obligated to follow through on its commitment to Massachusetts' young adults as they transition out of the state's child welfare system.**



### Fully Fund CLM's Priority Line Items at the Department of Children and Families (DCF)

These DCF line items fund **critical, cost-effective** and **impactful** provisions that support adolescents in care and young people who are preparing to age out of the system without permanency. Appropriate funding will lead to **less trauma** for adolescents, young adults, and families and **less reliance** on expensive care.

Line Item	Description	Governor's FY25 Proposal
4800-0040	Family Support & Stabilization	\$139,539,127
4800-0041	Congregate Care	\$495,889,634
4800-0038	Services for Children & Families	\$376,723,635

Funding these line items supports programs vital to transition age youth, such as:

- **Adolescent support networks** that offer a diverse range of supportive services offered within community advocacy centers.
- **Behavioral health services** that can benefit adolescents in-home, as well as those in care preparing to age out of care without permanency.
- **Transition to adulthood services** that support all youth, including youth with special needs, to gain skills to lead self-sufficient, healthy, productive, and responsible adult lives.
- **Teen pregnancy prevention** and **young parent support** programs.

### Additional Priorities

- ✓ **Maximize Implementation of the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Housing Vouchers Program**
  - **Increased staffing and resources** are needed for state agencies and contracted community providers to effectively implement this program.
  - Part of Family Unification Program line item (7004-9016).
- ✓ **Fund and Implement the BAY-CASH Initiative Across Massachusetts**
  - \$577,600 to cover one year of regular, modest cash transfers in this pilot program providing targeted supportive services to effectively **end youth homelessness** for 18 to 24-year-olds.



## LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

### ✓ An Act Protecting Benefits Owed to Foster Children

*Sponsors: Sen. Jo Comerford (S.65) & Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier (H.157)*

Every year, almost **1,250 children and young adults** in DCF custody are **stripped from receiving Social Security benefits** they are entitled to.<sup>1</sup>

Why? **DCF siphons about 90% of youth's benefits** into the Commonwealth's General Fund.<sup>2</sup> This amounts to about \$500,000 per month, \$5.5 million dollars per year, or **less than 0.5% of DCF's proposed FY25 budget**, which is negligible to DCF but is capable of being *transformative* for the young beneficiaries.<sup>3</sup>

**Without these vital funds, youth that age out of the system are at risk of serious financial instability, which often has devastating results, including homelessness, legal system involvement, and further trauma.**

Adopting this necessary legislation will:

- Ensure that children and young adults **receive the benefits they are legally entitled to** and are aware of the existence, availability, and use of funds conserved for them by the time they turn 14 years old.
- **Support financial independence** for transition-age youth and their caregivers through financial empowerment training and support.

### ✓ An Act Establishing a Bill of Rights for Children in Foster Care

*Sponsors: Sen. Jo Comerford (S.68) & Rep. Michael J. Finn (H.164)*

**Codifying and expanding existing rights** for children in foster care through this legislation is imperative to protect children who are in care today and young adults aging out of care. Transition age youth will benefit from:

- **Early transition planning** to promote stability with housing, employment, education, and physical and behavioral health.
- The **right to access their personal, medical, dental and educational records** at appropriate times.
- The understanding of their **right to sign back into DCF** care after turning 18 years old and prior to turning 23 years old.

1. Based on response provided by DCF, supplied in response to DLC public records request (on file with Disability Law Center, available upon request)

2. See 110 C.M.R. 4.05 (2023).

3. Monthly reports furnished by DCF contractor PCG for Jan. 2022 - Nov. 2022, supplied in response to DLC public records request (on file with Disability Law Center, available upon request).