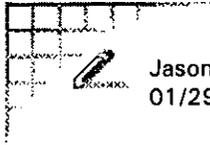


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Family - Foster Care Initiative



Jason H. Schechter
01/29/99 04:37:51 PM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:

Subject: First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton Announces New Efforts to Support Transitioning Foster Care Youth

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON ANNOUNCES NEW EFFORTS TO
SUPPORT TRANSITIONING FOSTER CARE YOUTH
January 29, 1999**

Today at the White House, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, accompanied by Mrs. Tipper Gore and Secretary Donna Shalala, announces that the President's FY 2000 budget will include \$280 million over five years in new support for young people who leave our nation's public foster care system at age 18 without an adoptive family or other permanent relationship.

Foster Care Youth Reaching Adulthood Face Tough Challenges. Nearly 20,000 young people leave foster care each year having reached the age of 18 without an adoptive family or other permanent relationship. Today, federal financial support for these young people ends just as they are making the critical transition to independence. Without the emotional, social and financial support that families provide, many of these youth are not adequately prepared for life on their own. Studies show that within two to four years of leaving foster care, only half have completed high school, fewer than half are employed, one-fourth have been homeless for at least one night, 30 percent did not have access to needed health care, 60 percent of the young women have given birth, and less than one-in-five are completely self-supporting.

New Support For Youth Leaving Foster Care. The President's FY 2000 budget will include \$280 million over five years to provide a framework for enhanced federal support to these young people:

Increasing the Federal Independent Living Program by 50 Percent. The Independent Living Program, run through the States, assists older foster care children to prepare for independence by helping them to earn a high school diploma, participate in vocational training or education, and learn daily living skills such as budgeting, career planning and securing housing and employment. Since 1992, the program's funding has been frozen at \$70 million. The President's budget will increase the program by 50 percent, investing \$175 million over five years in these services.

Offering Time Limited Economic Support. Young people often transition from foster care with no economic support. The President's budget will include \$50 million over four

years to create new competitive grants to States to complement the Independent Living program services by providing time-limited financial support for these young people as they develop the skills and education needed to move into the workforce.

Providing Health Insurance. Today, when young people emancipate from foster care, they face numerous health risks, but too often lose their health insurance. The President's budget will propose that these young people remain eligible for Medicaid up to age 21. His budget will include \$50 million over five years for this purpose.

Increasing the Transitional Living Program. The President's budget will include a 33 percent increase in the Transitional Living program, which provides competitive funds to local community-based organizations for residential care, life skills training, and other support services to homeless adolescents, ages 16-21. The program is currently funded at \$15 million; the President's budget will increase that funding by \$5 million for FY 2000.

CLINTON ADMINISTRATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS ON FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION

January 29, 1999

Today's announcement builds on a deep commitment by the President, the First Lady, and the Administration to facilitate adoptions and improve the child welfare system. Since taking office, President Clinton has championed efforts to make foster care work better for the children it serves, to find and assist adoptive families, and to break down financial, racial, geographic and bureaucratic barriers to adoption:

✓ **Achieving Landmark Legislative Reform.** On November 19, 1997, the President signed the Adoption and Safe Families Act, reforming our nation's child welfare system and making it clear that the health and safety of children must be the paramount concerns of state child welfare services. This landmark legislation was based in large part on the recommendations of the Clinton Administration's *Adoption 2002* report, which the President requested by executive memorandum on December 14, 1996, to meet his goals of doubling adoptions and permanent placements by the year 2002 and moving children more quickly from foster care to permanent homes. The Act tightened time frames for making permanent placement decisions for children and ensured health insurance coverage for all special needs children in subsidized adoptions. Also, it created new financial incentives for states to increase adoptions, and continued funding for services to keep families together when it is appropriate and safe.

✓ **Making Adoption Affordable for Families.** In 1996, President Clinton signed into law the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, which provides a \$5,000 tax credit to families adopting children, and a \$6,000 tax credit for families adopting children with special needs. This provision has alleviated a significant barrier to adoption, helping middle class families for whom adoption may be prohibitively expensive and making it easier for families to adopt children with special needs. Since President Clinton took office, the number of children with special needs who were adopted with federal adoption assistance has risen by over 60 percent. In the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, President Clinton ensured more support for families who adopt children with the \$500 per-child tax credit.

✓ **Giving States Flexibility and Support.** To test innovative strategies to improve state child welfare systems, the Clinton Administration has granted waivers to 18 states, giving them more flexibility in tailoring services to meet the needs of children and families. In addition, the Administration has provided states with enhanced technical support and helped improve court operations. The President secured \$20 million in FY 1999 in new funds to support state efforts to implement the new adoption law. In addition, through the Adoption Opportunities program, the President has supported state and local innovative demonstration projects to promote adoption, provide post-adoptive services, and build new public-private partnerships. To prevent children from entering foster care in the first place, in 1993 the Clinton Administration enacted and secured federal funding for the Family Preservation and Support Program (renamed in 1997 the Preserving Safe and Stable Families Program) to help states, local governments, and service providers develop effective programs to serve children and families at risk.

✓ **Using the Internet to Promote Adoption.** In November, 1998, the President issued a new directive to the Department of Health and Human Services to expand the use of the Internet as a tool to find homes for children waiting to be adopted from foster care. Effective use of the Internet will help to meet the President's goal of doubling, by the year 2002, adoptions and other permanent placements from the public child welfare system.

✓ **Breaking Down Racial and Ethnic Barriers to Adoption.** New inter-ethnic adoption provisions, passed as a part of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, ensure that the adoption process is free from discrimination and delays on the basis of race, culture and ethnicity by strengthening the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act which the President signed in 1994.

✓ **Providing Supports for Child Protection and Adoption.** In 1993, President Clinton signed into law the Family and Medical Leave Act, enabling parents to take time off to adopt a child without losing their jobs or health insurance. In addition, the welfare reform legislation signed by the President maintained the guarantee of child protection and adoption, and did not reduce funds for child welfare, child abuse, and foster care and adoption services.

Message Sent To: _____

Child Care Q&A
January 29, 1999

Q: What are the First Lady and Mrs. Gore announcing today on foster care?

A: The First Lady and Mrs. Gore will host an East Room ceremony at 3:00 pm to announce that the President's FY 2000 budget will include \$280 million over five years in new support for young people who leave our nation's public foster care system at age 18 without an adoptive family or other permanent relationship. The budget will:

- **Increase the Federal Independent Living Program by 50 Percent.** The Independent Living Program, run through the States, assists older foster care children to prepare for independence by helping them to earn a high school diploma, participate in vocational training or education, and learn daily living skills such as budgeting, career planning and securing housing and employment. Since 1992, the program's funding has been frozen at \$70 million. The President's budget will increase the program by 50 percent, investing \$175 million over five years in these services.
- **Offer Time Limited Economic Support.** Young people often transition from foster care with no economic support. The President's budget will include \$50 million over four years to create new competitive grants to States to complement the Independent Living program services by providing time-limited financial support for these young people as they develop the skills and education needed to move into the workforce.
- **Provide Health Insurance.** Today, when young people emancipate from foster care, they face numerous health risks, but too often lose their health insurance. The President's budget will propose that these young people remain eligible for Medicaid up to age 21. His budget will include \$50 million over five years for this purpose.
- **Increase the Transitional Living Program.** The President's budget will include a 33 percent increase in the Transitional Living program, which provides competitive funds to local community-based organizations for residential care, life skills training, and other support services to homeless adolescents, ages 16-21. The program is currently funded at \$15 million; the President's budget will increase that funding by \$5 million for FY 2000.

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Nicole R. Rabner

01/27/99 07:26:46 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP

cc: Elena Kagan/OPD/EOP, Jennifer L. Klein/OPD/EOP

Subject: Foster Care Leak



1PGEMAN.J

To prepare for tomorrow's leak of the budget initiative on emancipated foster care youth, attached above is a near-final draft of the announcement paper, and below, FYI, is a column from September 1998 that the First Lady wrote on this issue. The event is at 3:00pm on Friday in the East Room. Elena will confirm to whom we will leak in the morning.

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

RELEASE: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1998, AND THEREAFTER

I met the most extraordinary young woman last week. Joy Warren had just begun her first week at Yale Law School. But what's remarkable is that Joy grew up in foster care, and like more than 20,000 foster-care children each year, she "aged out" of the system when she turned 18.

This means Joy has been entirely on her own, without the traditional support system so many families provide, for the past seven years -- years in which she managed to receive a college degree, work as an advocate to improve foster care and begin law school.

Children who grow up in foster care face many of the same challenges as other children and have many of the same needs. But they also have special challenges that demand special attention -- and too often they just don't get it.

One 13-year-old foster child told me what she wants most: "I want a place that I can call home; a room that I can call my room; a family that I can love and would love me back." Is this too much to ask?

Although my own mother was never in formal foster care, her teen parents were unable to care for her when she was born. They sent her to live with her grandparents, but when that didn't work out, she went to live in the home of a family where she helped take care of the children for room and board.

My mother has often told me how grateful she is to the woman with whom she lived because she got to see what a real family was like. She watched what happens inside a home where parents and children go through all they should go through as a family. And she wanted to pass that

opportunity on.

When I was growing up, she invited young women from a group home to come and work for us, spending time with our family, much as my mother had done so many years before.

I'm proud that this Administration has cared enough to improve and reform our nation's foster-care system, including passing the Family and Medical Leave Act, which gives time off for parents to adopt a child. Tax credits are now available for families who adopt, and foster care and adoption have been freed from discrimination and delays based on race, culture and ethnicity.

I was especially proud when, last year, the President signed the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, a historic step toward improving the lives of children in foster care. The aim of this bill is to place this country's 500,000 foster-care children in safe, stable, loving and permanent homes. And it will help us meet our national goal of doubling the nation's annual adoption rate.

But, as important as this bill is, it doesn't address all the needs of the children who "age out" of the system each year and who, like Joy Warren, have to make the tough transition to living on their own.

Last year, at a roundtable in Berkeley, Calif., I spent an afternoon listening to young people describe the challenges of leaving the foster-care system. A disproportionate number are homeless and have trouble finishing school, finding jobs and receiving adequate health care. And, often, they don't get the life skills they need to survive in today's world.

There are many programs that work, several of which exist as a result of the advocacy and leadership of former foster kids like Joy. One national conference, Destination Future, where I met Joy last week, brings together older foster children and homeless young people to teach them life skills and advocacy techniques. Programs in Texas and Florida provide college-tuition assistance for young people in foster care. In Los Angeles County, set-aside entry-level jobs are available for young people aging out of foster care. Massachusetts has a teen parent transitional living program. And the California Youth Connection has become a national model of how to bring young foster teens together to form a network of support and advocacy.

One of the most critical challenges remaining is to make sure that children who age out of foster care gain access to health care. It is outrageous that these young people should find themselves among the uninsured. Some states are addressing this issue, but there is still far to go.

We must also strengthen the Federal Independent Living Program, which provides 85,000 young people critical assistance in their transition to independent living, helps them earn their high school diplomas and offers access to vocational training.

Federal legislation and state programs have put us on the right track. But we must do better. Now is the time to make sure that the 20,000 young people who each year become too old to remain in foster care receive the help they need to become independent and productive members of society.

To find out more about Hillary Rodham Clinton and read her past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at www.creators.com.

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Family - foster care initiative

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