

Senator Detert is Successful Champion for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

A bill that was never referred to as a housing bill and would not come up on a word search for “affordable housing” or “homelessness” on the Legislature’s website is going to have a substantial impact on affordable housing and the prevention of homelessness for one of Florida’s most vulnerable populations.

Dubbed by the Senate President the *Nancy C. Detert Common Sense and Compassion Independent Living Act*, Senate Bill 1036, passed in the 2013 legislative session, creates an essential safety net for youth aging out of foster care. When a person as young as an 18-year-old teenager is expected to live independently without the support of a parent or any family financial and emotional support system, the consequences can be dire—everything from living on the streets to death.

The *Nancy C. Detert Common Sense and Compassion Independent Living Act*, allows young adults to remain in foster care to age 21 to finish high school, earn a GED, pursue postsecondary education, or begin a career. The bill provides critically needed housing security. The highlights:

- Young persons living in licensed care on their 18th birthdays with no secured permanent living arrangement are eligible to remain in licensed care if he or she meets specified criteria;
- Requires a young adult choosing to remain in foster care beyond 18 years old to reside in a supervised living environment, approved by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or a community-based care lead agency (CBC);



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- Allows a young adult to leave and reenter foster care an unlimited number of times before reaching 21 years old;
- Requires a CBC lead agency to provide regular case management reviews that ensure at least monthly contact with a case manager while a young adult participates in extended foster care and requires the court to review his / her status at least every six months and hold a permanency hearing at least annually; and
 - Requires creating a transition plan after a child in foster care turns 17 that will be reviewed and updated as necessary until he or she leaves care.

The bill also restructures the current Road-to-Independence Program to better meet the needs of young adults enrolled in college who were in foster care or who are in extended foster care and allows foster parents to make regular day-to-day decisions about activities their foster children can participate in without fear of civil liability.

The Florida Housing Coalition applauds Senator Detert. **HNN**

