

S. 712, the Dosha Joi Immediate Coverage for Former Foster Youth Act

Introduced by Senator Casey

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) extended Medicaid coverage to age 26 for all foster youth who were in foster care on their 18th birthday and were already enrolled in Medicaid. This provision of the law was intended to create parity between these individuals and young adults who can stay on their parent's health insurance until the age of 26. It is mandatory for every state.

In 2018, a provision included in the bipartisan SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act fixed a "glitch" with this part of the ACA that allowed states to choose whether or not to cover former foster youth who aged out of the foster care system in another state. Section 1002 of the SUPPORT Act established that all former foster youth should qualify for Medicaid to 26, even if they move to another state after aging out of the system. Unfortunately, under the SUPPORT Act, this fix applies only to youth who age out of the system on or after January 1, 2023. This means that many former foster youth will continue to go without access to critical health care services. For that reason, Senator Casey has introduced the Dosha Joi Immediate Coverage for Former Foster Youth Act. This legislation:

- Eliminates the delay for the Medicaid to 26 fix. Instead, the fix will be in effect the day the Immediate Coverage Act becomes law; and
- Requires state Medicaid programs to work with state child welfare agencies to establish outreach and enrollment programs for this coverage. These outreach programs will be run in accordance with best practices established by HHS.

Research indicates that nearly 60 percent of children in foster care experience a chronic medical condition. While Medicaid provides vital assistance to these youth while they are in the foster care system, their health care needs do not end when they age out. Indeed, many former foster youth have physical, dental and behavioral health care needs that are well beyond those of the general population. This legislation is a reasonable expansion of current law, to ensure that our Nation does not delay in meeting its obligation to young adults who have nowhere else to turn.

This legislation is named after Dosha Joi, "DJay," a former foster youth studying to become a nurse when he died on May 14, 2020 of COVID-19. DJay was deeply compassionate, positive to his core, and joyously energetic. His goal was to do as much as possible to help youth aging out of care with mental health, addiction and independent living skills. He served as a Court Appointed Special Advocate, was a member of FosterClub and a Congressional Foster Youth Shadow Day participant and received multiple Champion for Change Awards.

A list of groups that have endorsed this bill is included on page 2.

Cosponsorship

To cosponsor the Dosha Joi Immediate Coverage for Former Foster Youth Act, please contact Doug Hartman in Senator Casey's office at doug_hartman@help.senate.gov.

Endorsements

The Dosha Joi Immediate Coverage for Former Foster Youth Act has been endorsed by the following groups:

- ACTION Ohio
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- Association of Children's Residential Centers (ACRC)
- Center for the Study of Social Policy
- Child Welfare League of America
- Children's Action Alliance
- Children's Advocacy Institute
- Children's Defense Fund
- Equality California
- Families USA
- Family Centered Treatment Foundation
- First Focus Campaign for Children
- Foster America
- Foster Club
- Generations United
- Goshen Valley Foundation, Inc.
- Healthy Teen Network
- John Burton Advocates for Youth
- Juvenile Law Center
- National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
- National Association of Counsel for Children
- National Center for Housing and Child Welfare
- National Crittenton Foundation
- National Foster Youth Institute
- OHIO YAB
- Partners for Our Children
- Penfield Children's Center
- Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
- SAFY of Alabama
- SAFY of Colorado
- SAFY of Indiana
- SAFY of Kentucky
- SAFY of Nevada
- SAFY of Ohio
- SAFY of South Carolina
- Think of Us
- Venice Family Clinic
- Voice for Adoption
- Young Invincibles