



BOB CASEY

FIGHTING for PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES

The Fostering Success in Higher Education Act

U.S. Senators Bob Casey and Sherrod Brown

In today's economy, a college degree or postsecondary credential is increasingly important to securing a job with a living wage and good benefits. Yet far too often, higher education remains out of reach for foster and homeless youth. Foster and homeless youth often experience poor academic preparation, considerable financial hardship, housing challenges, and limited social capital to help navigate the varied demands of higher education. For example, a [study](#) by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab found that the students at greatest risk of basic needs insecurity were former foster youth. Sixty percent of these students were food insecure and housing insecure, and almost 1 in 4 had experienced homelessness in the last year. These youth also are at higher risk for lasting health and mental health effects from traumas experienced, poor health care, and other stressors that undermine college success.

Many of these challenges are reflected in low college graduation and attendance rates. A [report](#) produced by the National Working Group on Foster Care and Education found that, although more than 70 percent of 17-18-year-olds in foster care want to attend college, fewer than half enroll in postsecondary education and only 3 to 11 percent attain a bachelor's degree. In fact, a 2021 [report](#) by John Burton Advocates for Youth found that foster youth experienced the highest rate of failure in Satisfactory Academic Progress—34 percent—after the first year of college. The findings from a Government Accountability Office [report](#) indicate unaccompanied homeless youth have similar college enrollment patterns as foster youth. To enable foster and homeless youth to have the best chance in school, work, and life, we must ensure these students have the appropriate support to enroll and graduate with a postsecondary credential.

The Fostering Success in Higher Education Act would improve college access, retention, and completion rates for foster and homeless youth by substantially improving state capacity to support these students as they transition to and attend college. Specifically, this bill would:

- Invest \$150 million a year in states, tribes, and territories to establish or expand statewide initiatives to assist foster and homeless youth in enrolling in and graduating from institutions of higher education;
- Establish formula grants to states based on a state's share of foster youth and homeless youth, with a \$500,000 minimum grant;
- Dedicate 70 percent of grants to (a) developing Institutions of Excellence committed to serving foster and homeless youth via robust support services; (b) covering the remaining cost of attendance beyond federal and state grant aid, (c) providing comprehensive wraparound services, and (d) offering robust student health and mental health services;
- Direct 25 percent of grants to establish intensive, statewide transition initiatives to improve the college going culture and increase college enrollment by foster and homeless youth;
- Reserve 7 percent of funds for technical assistance and evaluation, 3 percent for tribes, tribal consortia, or tribal organizations and 2 percent for territories.

Supporting Organizations: SchoolHouse Connection, Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Center for the Study of Social Policy, Children's Defense Fund, Family Promise, First Focus Campaign for Children, Juvenile Law Center, National Association for the Counsel for Children, National Coalition for the Homeless, National Education Association, and the Student Housing Advocate Alliance.