

MORE THAN WORDS

ISSUE & POLICY PRIORITIES



Preventing the Child Welfare to Homeless Pipeline

30-50% of our homeless youth population is coming out of our Child Welfare System. While the Department of Children and Families (DCF) has the option for youth to sign-on for voluntary services when they turn 18, only 30% of youth in DCF continue to receive services. There are not enough developmentally appropriate housing options available. Young people's complex behavioral health issues often make them deemed "non-compliant" with expectations. And, many young people are simply ready to leave a system that does not provide them what they need. The result is that young people's cases are closed at age 18 and, without support, too many become homeless. Federal, state, DCF, and court law and policy all specify the requirement for a thoughtful transition planning process to map next steps for their housing, education, health, work, and life when youth turn 18. This is not happening consistently.

S.85/H.248 will ensure additional steps to support youth aging out of state custody and prevent youth homelessness:

Accountability for transition planning

- While reinforcing existing laws for transition planning, this bill will also ensure CPCS provides training and increased accountability for Child and Family Lawyers (CAFLs) to be engaged and ensure that all stakeholders are present in court and accountable for transition plans.
- This bill requires additional data reporting about Transition Age Youth by DCF so it is more transparent what is happening to young people aging out of the systems.

More developmentally appropriate options

- The state needs more options for young people who are unable to be stably reunified with family or who struggle in traditional group homes and foster homes.
- This bill ensures that substandard options such as shelters are not allowed as part of transition plans.
- Increased accountability is also required to coordinate among state agencies to ensure housing and social services agencies are working together in a more cohesive way to support Transition Age Youth.

Increased investments for transition-age youth

- It is currently unclear if MA is accessing reimbursable Title IVE funds to provide more support services and housing for young adults over 18. The data is not disaggregated to really understand what investments are being accessed for over 18 year olds.
- This bill requires the state to account for all available resources to ensure increased options for TAY housing by ensuring a statewide coordinated effort, including additional [Foster Youth to Independence \(FYI\) Vouchers](#)

Contact your state legislator to co-sponsor Bill S.85/H.248

More Than Words (MTW) is nonprofit social enterprise that empowers youth ages 16-24 who are in the foster care system, court involved, homeless, or out of school to take charge of their lives by taking charge of a business. At locations in Boston and Waltham, MTW serves 300 of our most vulnerable youth each year. Youth run a \$3.6M business, working paid jobs ~20 hours per week and learning critical skills, while simultaneously working a paid "YOU" job learning life skills and making progress in education, work, and life. After 6-12 months youth continue to receive proactive support in a Career Services Program for 2 years to secure jobs in the community, complete their high school diploma or equivalent, pursue post-secondary credentials, and advance along their career pathway.