



## Virginia Poverty Law Center

### Help More Former Foster Youth Become Successful Adults **SUPPORT SB84 (Favola)**

**The Problem:** Although many localities in Virginia offer youth in foster care independent living services until they turn 21, youth often don't see the advantage of those services until it's too late. These young adults discontinue services when they turn 18, and current law gives them only 60 days to realize they've made a mistake and have services restored. Those who realize they need help 120 days, or 90 days, or even 61 days after discontinuing services must be turned away by social services.

**The Solution:** Virginia should extend the period of time during which a young adult who has left foster care can request and obtain independent living services from social services. This would enable more youth entering adulthood to obtain these services, which include counseling and help finding housing and employment.<sup>1</sup>

- **SB84 would extend the time period during which a young adult who discontinued Independent Living Services after turning 18 can have those services restored. Under SB84, Independent Living Services would be restored to youth who:**
  - Discontinued services after age 18, but asked their local department of social services to restore those services **within 180 days** of discontinuing services.
  - Entered into a written agreement with social services about the terms and conditions of their receiving the services.
- **Youth in foster care who continue to receive services after age 18:**
  - Are two to three times more likely to be enrolled in college than those who discontinued services at age 18<sup>2</sup>
  - Are less likely to have their utilities cut off or be evicted than those who discontinued services at age 18<sup>3</sup>
- **In a recent study, former foster youth reported they needed assistance with independent living skills before they transitioned to living on their own.<sup>4</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Code 16.1-228 says such services "include counseling, education, housing, employment and money management skills development and access to essential documents."

<sup>2</sup> Courtney, M.; Dworsky, A.; Havlicek, J.; Bost, N., *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 19* (May 2005)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Courtney, M., Dworsky, A., Lee, J. and Rapp, M. (2009) *Midwest Evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 23 and 24*