

December 3, 2014

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy, Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley, Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate

The Honorable John Kline, Chairman, Committee on Education and the Workforce, United States House of Representatives

The Honorable George Miller, Ranking Member, Committee on Education and the Workforce, United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Grassley, Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Miller:

The National Network for Youth, True Colors Fund, Center for American Progress, and the **353 undersigned national, state and local organizations** urge you to support passage of the Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act, S. 2646, to reauthorize the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) (42 U.S.C. 5601) which expired in September of 2013. RHYA has provided lifesaving services and housing for America's homeless and human trafficked youth for forty years and is a youth-appropriate response to young people suffering in homelessness.

Homelessness is affecting youth in unprecedented numbers, from all backgrounds and from every walk of life. The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that each year there are about 550,000 unaccompanied youth who experience homelessness for longer than one week. Despite the staggering number of homeless youth, there are fewer than 4,800 Runaway and Homeless Youth Act-funded beds dedicated to serving these vulnerable young people.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs serve homeless youth by meeting their immediate needs and providing long-term residential services for youth that cannot safely reunify with family. These programs also conduct outreach and provide prevention services to move youth out of homelessness, crisis and harm. In 2013, 94 percent of the minors who entered Basic Center Programs exited these programs safely and appropriately, and 72 percent were reunited with their families. Similarly, 88 percent of youth in Transitional Living Programs made safe and appropriate exits in 2013. These programs are critical in helping homeless youth stay off the streets and find stable, sustainable housing.

Homeless youth are vulnerable. Because homeless youth lack safety, basic life needs and are unprotected by the support and care of adults, they are at risk of victimization, abuse, being targeted by human traffickers, criminal justice involvement and death. Research shows that 40 to 60 percent of homeless youth have experienced physical abuse. Furthermore, up to 40 percent of homeless youth are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender and are at heightened risk of victimization. Without a safe place to stay young people suffer and remain disconnected from education, the workforce, community involvement and struggle to enter adulthood successfully.

RHYA programs prevent displaced youth from falling victim to human trafficking and have experience in identifying and providing services to survivors. Because runaway and homeless youth are often desperate to

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Provides:

Street Outreach Programs

Relationship-building, prevention, counseling and referrals to vital services for runaway, homeless and human trafficking youth.

Basic Center Programs

Temporary housing with crisis intervention services to minors including counseling, family reunification and aftercare services.

Transitional Living Programs

Longer-term housing with supportive services for homeless 16 to 21 year olds, including education reconnection, job preparation, health care--includes Maternity Group Homes.

survive and lack the support and care of adults, they are left unprotected and at risk of being targeted by human traffickers. Each year, 25,000 youth find shelter with the support of Street Outreach Program staff. Basic Center and Transitional Living Programs provide victims with a safe place to stay, access to a wide range of trauma-informed counseling and care and a supportive community where the young person can heal.

S. 2646 Runaway and Homeless Youth Reauthorization Act will strengthen communities' capacity to respond to youth in crisis, homeless youth and victims of human trafficking in the following ways:

Improves the quality and range of services provided by RHYA programs, including:

- The inclusion of the youth's family when possible, and the requirement that services be culturally and linguistically appropriate and include trauma-informed care.
- A referral plan in Transitional Living Programs for mental health care, including referrals to programs providing services to survivors of human trafficking.

Reinforces RHYA's commitment to serving the most at-risk youth.

- Basic Center Programs must coordinate with outreach programs to victims of human trafficking.
- Adds definition of "Trafficking in Persons" (referencing the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7102)).
- Applicants will be given priority if they propose staff training on certain topics, including best practices on identifying and serving youth who are victims of human trafficking.
- Provides nondiscrimination language to guarantee that all youth receive culturally and linguistically competent care.

Enhances data collection of RHYA-funded programs.

- Transitional Living and Basic Center Programs must provide statistical summaries describing the number, characteristics and demographics of the youth served, including prevalence of human trafficking, the number of youth who are pregnant or parenting, or had been involved in either the child welfare or juvenile justice system.

A full and inclusive reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act would allow for the continuation of critically needed services and safety for young people who run away, are thrown out or are exiting other systems of care and become disconnected from families. Similarly, the reauthorization would improve Runaway and Homeless Youth providers' identification of and response to victims of human trafficking.

Without a safe place to live homeless youth suffer further abuse, trauma, victimization and exploitation.

The longer these young people languish alone and without guidance, protection or access to basic life needs, the risk of mental health deterioration, victimization, criminal justice involvement, and lifetime homelessness increases. A safe place to sleep, eat, grow and develop is vital for these young people to enter adulthood prepared, educated and able to support themselves as adults.

Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children, youth and families. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

1. American Psychological Association
2. ATEST
3. Campaign for Youth Justice
4. Campus Pride
5. CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
6. Coalition for Juvenile Justice
7. Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders

8. Covenant House International
9. CSH
10. Elev8
11. Family & Youth Roundtable
12. First Focus Campaign for Children
13. Futures Without Violence
14. Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
15. Healthy Teen Network
16. Human Rights Campaign
17. Human Rights Project for Girls
18. International Organization for Adolescents
19. Justice for Families
20. League of United Latin American Citizens
21. MANY
22. Marriage Equality USA
23. National Alliance to End Homelessness
24. National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
25. National Association of School Psychologists
26. National Center for Housing and Child Welfare
27. National Center for Lesbian Rights
28. National Center for Transgender Equality
29. National Coalition for the Homeless
30. National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs
31. National Council of Jewish Women
32. National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
33. National Juvenile Justice Network
34. National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty
35. National Minority AIDS Council
36. National PTA
37. National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
38. National Safe Place Network
39. National Youth Advocate Program
40. PFLAG National
41. Polaris
42. Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
43. School Social Work Association of America
44. Shared Hope International
45. SparkAction
46. StandUp For Kids
47. The Fenway Institute at Fenway Health
48. Trevor Project
49. Turnaround Achievement Network
50. W. Haywood Burns Institute

State Organizations

51. Advocates for Children and Youth, Maryland
52. Advocates for Children of NJ
53. Basic Rights Oregon

54. California Coalition for Youth
55. Children's Alliance
56. Children's Home Society of Florida
57. Child and Family Services of New Hampshire
58. Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
59. Coalition for Homeless Youth, New York
60. Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST), California
61. Connections Individual and Family Services, Texas
62. Covenant House Florida
63. Crossroads Rhode Island
64. Florida Network of Youth and Family Services
65. Gale Kuns Ministries, Inc., California
66. Help Me Grow, Ohio
67. Illinois Collaboration on Youth
68. Illinois Head Start Association
69. Juvenile Justice Coalition, Ohio
70. LifeTies, Inc., New Jersey
71. Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota
72. Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin
73. Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance
74. New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
75. New Mexico Voices for Children
76. Ohio Afterschool Network
77. Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association
78. Preble Street, Maine
79. Texans Care for Children
80. The Center for Community Solutions, Ohio
81. The Mockingbird Society, Washington
82. Turner Unified School District #202, Kansas
83. Unheard Voices, Georgia
84. Vermont Coalition of Runaway & Homeless Youth Programs
85. Voices for Ohio's Children
86. Voices for Utah Children
87. Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services
88. Wisconsin Council on Children and Families

Regional Organizations

89. Attention Homes, Boulder, CO
90. Alternative House, VA
91. BAGLY, MA
92. Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center, PA
93. Center for Health Justice, CA
94. Charities Housing, CA
95. Children's Aid Society, AL
96. Columbus Literacy Council, OH
97. Community Technology Alliance, CA
98. Compass Family and Community Services, OH
99. DC Center for LGBT Community

100. Easter Seals Northern Ohio
101. Emerging Workforce Initiative, KY
102. Friends of Youth, WA
103. Greater Light Ministries, LA
104. Hetrick-Martin Institute, NY
105. Janus Youth Programs, Inc., OR
106. Hillcrest Transitional Housing, Kansas City, KS
107. Kids TLC, KS
108. K'STAR, Inc., TX
109. Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, FL
110. Long Island Gay and Lesbian Youth, NY
111. Long Island GLBT Community Center, NY
112. Long Island GLBT Services Network, NY
113. Metropolitan Community Church of New York Charities, Inc., New York, NY
114. Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing, MN
115. New Vision Youth Services, Inc., Chesapeake
116. Only Hope WNC, Inc., NC
117. Oswego County Opportunities, Inc., NY
118. PathWays PA
119. Resource Center, TX
120. Shaw House, Bangor, ME
121. Second Chance Technology Edge, Houston, TX
122. Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness, CA
123. Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc., Washington, DC Metro Area
124. Sconiers Homeless Preventive Organization, Inc., GA
125. Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders- Long Island, NY
126. SMYAL, DC
127. Social Advocates for Youth, CA
128. Staircase Youth Services, Inc., MI
129. Teaching & Restoring Youth Inc., Buffalo, NY
130. UMOM New Day Centers, AZ
131. Victoria Area Homeless Coalition, TX
132. Western Montana LGBT Community Center
133. Western Regional Advocacy Project, CA
134. Youth and Family Alternatives, Inc., FL
135. Youth Bridge, Inc., AR
136. YouthCare, WA
137. Youth Pride, Inc., RI
138. Zebra Coalition, FL

Local Organizations

139. Ali Forney Center, New York, NY
140. A Life Line, Smyrna, ME
141. Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, St. Paul MN
142. Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness, Anchorage, AK
143. Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services (Project ALWAYS), Phoenix, AZ
144. Arizona Youth Partnership, Kingman, AZ
145. Attention Homes, Boulder, CO

146. Avenues for Homeless Youth, Minneapolis, MN
147. Bethel AME Church, Bridgeport, CT
148. Bill Wilson Center, Santa Clara, CA
149. brainPOWER.me, Bronx, NY
150. Brooklyn Community Pride Center, Brooklyn, NY
151. CAP Services' Family Crisis Center, Stevens Point, WI
152. CAPTAIN Youth and Family Services, Clifton Park, NY
153. Carolina Outreach Foundation, Durham, NC
154. Cascade AIDS Project, Portland, OR
155. Cascade Rainbow Community Center, Mount Vernon, WA
156. Casper Housing Authority, Casper, WY
157. Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte, Winston Salem, NC
158. Catholic Charities of Herkimer County, Ilion, NY
159. Center for Family Services, Camden, NJ
160. Center For Youth, Rochester, NY
161. Center for Youth Services, Camden, NJ
162. Central Ohio Mental Health Center, Delaware, OH
163. Central Texas Youth Services, Belton, TX
164. Children in Need of Hugs, Suisun City, CA
165. Christian City Children's Village, Union City, GA
166. City House, Inc., Plano, TX
167. CIYMCA – Noah's Anchorage Youth Crisis Shelter, Santa Barbara, CA
168. CMCS Sunrise Drop In Center, Bronx, NY
169. CODAC Behavioral Health, Tucson, AZ
170. Columbus Speech & Hearing Center, Columbus, OH
171. Common Ground, Bloomfield, MI
172. Community Human Services, Monterey, CA
173. Community Youth Services, Olympia, WA
174. Compass House, Buffalo, NY
175. Council of Churches Greater Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT
176. Council to End Homelessness in Durham, Durham, NC
177. Crisis Center, Inc., a Youth Service Bureau, Gary, IN
178. Cypress Place, Port Huron, MI
179. Daybreak, Dayton, OH
180. DC Alliance of Youth Advocate, Washington, DC
181. Discovery Homecare Inc., Gastonia, NC
182. East Oakland Community Project, Oakland, CA
183. ESS/ Safe Space, New York, NY
184. Face to Face Health and Counseling Services, Inc., St. Paul, MN
185. Father Flanagan's Boys' Home, Boys Town, NE
186. Fairbanks Counseling and Adoption, Fairbanks, AK
187. Families in Crisis, Inc., Killeen, TX
188. Family and Children's Association, Mineola, NY
189. Family and Children's Service of Niagara, Niagara Falls, NY
190. Family Assistance Program, Victorville, CA
191. Family Resources, Inc., Pinellas Park, FL
192. Fertig, Gold & Leiberman, Santa Monica, CA
193. First United Church of Christ, Bridgeport, CT

194. Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission, Fresno, CA
195. Friends and Neighbors, Kingsport, TN
196. Fulton County Schools-Program for Children and Youth in Transition, Atlanta, GA
197. Gateway Community Services, Lansing MI
198. Generation Joshua Outreach Ministry, Bridgeport, CT
199. Genesis Home, Inc., Durham, NC
200. G.I.R.L.S. Ranch, Murfreesboro, TN
201. Good Shepherd Services, New York, NY
202. Grayson County Juvenile Alternatives, Inc., Sherman, TX
203. Harbor, Port Huron, ME
204. Harlandale ISD, San Antonio, TX
205. Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults- Youth Services Division, Houston, TX
206. Haven House Services, Inc., Raleigh, NC
207. Henrico County Public Schools, Henrico, VA
208. Highland County Help Me Grow, Hillsboro, OH
209. Hillside Children's Center, Rochester, NY
210. Home Start, Inc., San Diego, CA
211. Homeless Children's Education Fund, Pittsburgh, PA
212. Homeless Education Assistance Resource Team of PBC School District, Belle Glade, FL
213. Homeless Youth Connection, Goodyear, AZ
214. Home Counselors, Inc., Rockland, ME
215. Hope Community Outreach, Citra, FL
216. Hope 4 Youth, Anoka, MN
217. House of Hope for Alcoholics, Inc., Columbus, OH
218. Housing Options for Students in Transition, Shelton, WA
219. Huckleberry Youth Programs, San Francisco, CA
220. Imeinu Inc DBA Rachel's Place, Brooklyn, NY
221. Innerlink Services, Saginaw, MI
222. Interface Children & Family Services, Camarillo, CA
223. Interfaith Emergency Services, Inc., Ocala, FL
224. Introspect Youth Services, Inc., Chicago, IL
225. JCOMC, Bridgeport, CT
226. Jesse Lee United Methodist Church, Easton, CT
227. Juneau Youth Services, Juneau, AK
228. Just Us @ Oasis Center, Nashville, TN
229. Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center (KGLRC), Kalamazoo, MI
230. Kids in Crisis, Greenwich, CT
231. Kids in Need Youth Program, Rhinelander, WI
232. Kingsport City Schools Homeless Education Program, Kingsport, TN
233. Kiwanis of North Phoenix, Phoenix, AZ
234. LA LGBT Center, Los Angeles, CA
235. Larkin Street Youth Services, San Francisco, CA
236. Las Cruces Public Schools Project Link Homeless Education, Las Cruces, NM
237. Latin American Youth Center, Washington, DC
238. Legal Advocates for Children and Youth, San Jose, CA
239. Lighthouse Youth Services, Cincinnati, OH
240. Lost-n-Found Youth, Atlanta, GA

241. Loving Arms, Inc., Baltimore, MD
242. Lucie's Place, Little Rock, AR
243. LUK, Inc., Fitchburg, MA
244. Manhattan-Ogden USD 383, Manhattan, KS
245. MCCNY Charities, Inc., New York, NY
246. Mecosta Osceola Youth Attention Center, Big Rapids, MI
247. Memphis Gay and Lesbian Community Center, Memphis, TN
248. Merced River Elementary School District, Winton, CA
249. Miami Coalition for the Homeless, Miami, FL
250. Montgomery County Youth Services, Conroe, TX
251. Montgomery Homeless Coalition, Conroe, TX
252. Morgan County System of Services, Inc., Decatur, Al
253. Mothers Assisting Mothers, Inc., Akron, OH
254. Murfreesboro-Rutherford County Homeless Task Force, Murfreesboro, TN
255. Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth, Las Vegas, NV
256. New Moms, Inc., Chicago, IL
257. New Morning Youth & Family Services, Placerville, CA
258. Non Profit Evolution, Inc., Columbus, OH
259. North County LGBTQ Resource Center, Oceanside, CA
260. Northwest Family Services, Inc., Alva, OK
261. Northwest Youth Services, Bellingham, WA
262. Northwestern Human Services, Salem, OR
263. Oasis for Youth, Bloomington, MN
264. One-n-ten, Phoenix, AZ
265. Open Arms Inc., Albany, GA
266. OutCenter, Benton Harbor, MI
267. OutSmart Magazine, Houston, TX
268. Pathfinders Milwaukee, Inc., Milwaukee, WI
269. PeterCares House, Greenbelt, MD
270. PFLAG Portland, Portland, OR
271. Pridelines Youth Services, Miami Shores, FL
272. Pide Center of Staten Island, NY
273. Project 16:49, Beloit, WI
274. Project TAG, Tyler, TX
275. Project YES, Modesto, CA
276. Promise House, Inc., Dallas, TX
277. Q Center Oregon, Portland, OR
278. RCAA Youth Services Bureau, Eureka, CA
279. ReStart, Inc., Kansas City, MO
280. Ruth Ellis Center, Detroit, MI
281. Sacramento LGBT Community Center, Sacramento, CA
282. Safe Horizon, Inc., New York, NY
283. Safe Place for Youth, Los Angeles CA
284. Salem-Keizer Public Schools Students in Transition Educational Program, Salem, OR
285. Salem Lutheran Church, Bridgeport, CT
286. Sanctuary, Huntington, NY
287. Sanctuary of Hope, Los Angeles, CA
288. San Diego Youth Services, San Diego, CA

289. San Francisco Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Community Center, CA
290. Saugatuck Congregational Church, Westport, CT
291. Shaw House, Bangor, ME
292. Southern Nevada Children First, Las Vegas, NV
293. South Mississippi Children's Center, Hattiesburg, MI
294. Southwest Key Programs, Inc., Austin, TX
295. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Fairfield, CT
296. StandUp for Kids-DC Chapter, Washington, DC
297. Synergy Services, Inc., Kansas City, MO
298. Teens Alone, Hopkins, MN
299. Teen Living Programs, Chicago, IL
300. The Bridge for Youth, Minneapolis, MN
301. The Center for Youth Services, Rochester, NY
302. The Corner Health Center, Ypsilanti, MI
303. The Connection Youth Services, Howell, MI
304. The DC Center for the LGBT Community, Washington, DC
305. The Franciscan Center, Buffalo, NY
306. The Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center of Orange County, CA
307. The Oasis of Kingsport, Kingsport, TN
308. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, New York, NY
309. The [LGBTQ] Center of the Finger Lakes, Geneva, NY
310. The Link, Minneapolis, MN
311. The Montrose Center, Houston, TX
312. The Night Ministry, Chicago, IL
313. The Relatives, Inc., Charlotte, NC
314. The South County Collaborative, Gilroy, CA
315. The Village Family Services, North Hollywood, CA
316. The YMCA Mohawk Valley, Mohawk, NY
317. TransActive Gender Center, Portland, OR
318. Triangle Community Center, Norwalk, CT
319. Triangle Empowerment Center, Durham, NC
320. Trinity Place Shelter, New York, NY
321. Tumbleweed, Billings, MT
322. Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development, Phoenix, AZ
323. United Way of King County, Seattle, WA
324. United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona, Tucson, AZ
325. Unity Hill UCC, Trumbull CT
326. Urban Peak Colorado Springs, Colorado Springs, CO
327. Utah Price, Salt Lake City, UT
328. VISD's KIDZconnection, Victoria, TX
329. Volunteers of America, Utah, Salt Lake City, UT
330. Walker's Point Youth and Family Center, Milwaukee, WI
331. Wasatch Mental Health, Provo, UT
332. West End Residences HDFC, Inc., New York, NY
333. Wichita Children's Home, Wichita, KS
334. Winnacunnet High School, Hampton, NH
335. Women Against Abuse, Inc., Philadelphia, PA

336. Wyandotte Homeless Services Coalition/Wyandotte County Continuum of Care, Kansas City, KS
337. Yamhill Community Action Partnership, McMinnville, OR
338. Yinovate, LLC, Cleveland, OH
339. Young Adult Guidance Center, Atlanta, GA
340. Youth Focus, Inc., Eugene, OR
341. Youth and Shelter Services, Inc., Ames, IA
342. Youth Bureau of Ister County, NY
343. Youth Emergency Services, Omaha, NE
344. Youth Forum Maine, Knox Interfaith Teen Safe-havens Project, Rockland, ME
345. Youth Service, Inc./Youth Emergency Service, Philadelphia, PA
346. Youth Service Bureau, Springfield IL
347. Youth Service Bureau of St. Joseph County Inc., South Bend, IN
348. Youth Services Bureau of Monroe County, Bloomington, IN
349. Youth Services for Stephens County, Inc., Duncan, OK
350. Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin, Madison, WI
351. Youth Services of Tulsa, Tulsa, OK
352. Youth Spirit Artworks, Berkeley, CA
353. YouthLink, Minneapolis, MN