

March 18, 2015

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

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

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Leahy:

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA), originally part of the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Act and last reauthorized by the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008 (P.L.110-378), provides vital services to runaway, homeless, and disconnected youth. This modest investment has laid the foundation for a national system of services for our most vulnerable young people, runaway and homeless youth, and we urge your full support of this legislation.

**School-age children not living with their parents are at the greatest risk for coerced labor exploitation, domestic servitude, or commercial sexual exploitation.**

**Runaway and homeless youth are more likely to fall victim to sexual exploitation than their peers and 28% of youth living on the street trade sex for basic needs such as food or shelter.**<sup>1</sup> One 2013 survey by a New York City service provider found that one in four homeless youth had been a victim of sex trafficking or had engaged in survival sex. Of those, 48% had done so because they did not have a safe place to stay.<sup>2</sup> A survey of youth in a homeless shelter in Salt Lake City found that 50 percent reported having been solicited for sex by an adult.<sup>3</sup> Like female and minority populations, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth are at heightened risk for exploitation, in part because of the disproportionate number of LGBT young people experiencing homelessness<sup>4</sup> – and yet many do not seek services due to fear of discrimination.

**Homeless youth are often targeted by labor traffickers because they lack access to resources they need to live, such as shelter, food, and personal connections—yet the promises of paid employment are not realized.** A survey conducted by the National Network for Youth in 2013 of Runaway and Homeless Youth programs found that runaway and homeless youth had been targeted by door-to-door trafficking sales rings. These youth were lured by the promise of housing, employment and food. What they actually received were impossible sales quotas and no pay for their work, and were placed in overcrowded motel rooms with other labor-trafficked youth. Thankfully, RHYA Street Outreach workers encountered these young people and connected them to the youth-appropriate housing and the help they needed to either go home or become stably housed.

**Runaway and Homeless Youth programs are located in communities across the country and are often best positioned to prevent trafficking and commercial exploitation and provide early identification of survivors of these crimes.** RHY programs also provide survivors of human trafficking with hope, safety, healing, and opportunities for a new life through: emergency shelters, family reunification work when safe, aftercare, outreach, education and employment, health care, behavioral and mental health, transitional housing, and independent housing options. Because these programs are in a strategic position to prevent trafficking, program resources must be increased in order to adequately protect youth from sex and labor trafficking.

The below signed organizations ask for your full and active support of the Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act.

Sincerely,

<sup>1</sup> Jody M. Greene, Susan T. Ennett, & Christopher L. Ringwalt, *Prevalence and Correlates of Survival Sex Among Runaway and Homeless Youth*, 89 Am. J. Pub. Health 1406, 1408 (1999), available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1508758/pdf/amjph00009-0102.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Covenant House, *Homelessness, Survival Sex and Human Trafficking: As Experienced by the Youth of Covenant House New York 6* (2013), available at <http://www.covenanthouse.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Covenant-House-trafficking-study.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Linda A. Smith, Samantha Healy Vardaman, and Melissa A. Snow, "The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking" (Arlington, VA: Shared Hope International, 2009), p. 64, available at [http://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/SHI\\_National\\_Report\\_on\\_DMST\\_2009.pdf](http://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/SHI_National_Report_on_DMST_2009.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Chelsea Parsons, Andrew Cray, Malika Saada Saar, & Yasmin Vafa, *3 Key Challenges in Combating the Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States*, (2014), available at <http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/HumanTrafficking-brief.pdf>.

### The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Provides:

**Street Outreach Programs**  
Outreach to runaway, homeless and human trafficked youth to build relationships and refer youth to vital services at street locations and drop-in centers.

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

**Transitional Living Programs**  
Longer-term housing with supportive services for homeless 16 to 21 year olds, including education, job preparation, health care—funds Maternity Group Homes.

**National Study of the Prevalence, Needs and Characteristics of Homeless Youth in America**  
Collects data about the runaway and homeless youth population in the United States in order to scale-to-need the prevention and crisis intervention services homeless youth need to thrive

## **NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

1. AccuWord, LLC
2. Alliance to End Slavery & Trafficking (ATEST)
3. American Psychological Association
4. Campaign for Youth Justice
5. Center for Children's Law and Policy
6. CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Center
7. Children's Advocacy Institute
8. Child Welfare League of America
9. Coalition for Juvenile Justice
10. Covenant House International
11. ECPAT-USA
12. Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.
13. Family Equality Council
14. Family Promise
15. First Focus Campaign for Children
16. Free the Slaves
17. Foster Family-based Treatment Association
18. FosterClub
19. Freedom Network USA
20. Funders Together to End Homelessness
21. Futures Without Violence
22. Girls Inc.
23. Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
24. Healthy Teen Network
25. HEAR US, Inc.
26. Hetrick-Martin Institute
27. Human Rights Campaign
28. Human Rights Project for Girls
29. Indian Oaks Academy
30. International Human Trafficking Institute
31. International Organization for Adolescents (IOFA)
32. Jewish Women International
33. Lambda Legal
34. MANY
35. Marriage Equality USA
36. National Association of Counsel for Children
37. National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
38. National Center for Housing and Child Welfare
39. National Center for Lesbian Rights
40. National Children's Alliance
41. National Coalition for the Homeless
42. National Council of Jewish Women
43. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

44. National Domestic Violence Hotline
45. National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
46. National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
47. National Network for Youth
48. National PTA
49. National Safe Place Network
50. National Youth Advocate Program
51. Peace Alliance
52. Polaris
53. PRISM Pride and Respect for Individuals in Sexual Minorities
54. Reclaiming Lost Voices
55. SAFE Coalition for Human Rights
56. School Social Work Association of America
57. Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
58. Shared Hope International
59. Southwest Key Programs
60. StandUp For Kids
61. Student Peace Alliance
62. The Equity Project
63. The Forum for Youth Investment
64. The General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church
65. The National Crittenton Foundation
66. The Peace Alliance
67. The Trevor Project
68. True Colors Fund
69. U.S. Fund for UNICEF
70. U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
71. W. Haywood Burns Institute

## **REGIONAL**

72. Ali Forney Center, New York, NY
73. Art Expression Inc., Pittsburgh, PA
74. BeaSister2aSister, Brooklyn, NY
75. CAP Services, Inc., Stevens Point, WI
76. Caring for Children, Inc., Asheville, NC
77. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany, NY
78. Center for Health Justice, Inc.
79. Children's Hospital Los Angeles, Los Angeles CA
80. Community Youth Services, Olympia, WA
81. Compass Family & Community Services, Youngstown, OH
82. Congregation of St. Joseph, OH
83. Covenant House New Orleans, LA
84. Free2Be Safe Anti-Violence Project, Huntsville, AL
85. Hope Hollow Exploitation Victim Assistance and Consultation, PA
86. Interface Children & Family Services, CA
87. Janus Youth Programs, Portland, OR

88. Latin American Youth Center, Washington, DC
89. Long Island Crisis Center/Pride for Youth, NY
90. Loving Arms, Inc. , MD
91. LUK, Inc., Fitchburg & Worcester, MA
92. Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan
93. Rainbow House, MO
94. Runaway and Homeless Youth Services- Boys & Girls Clubs of America
95. Ryan's House for Youth, Freeland, WA
96. Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness, CA
97. Safe Harbor Children's Center, Brunswick, GA
98. San Diego Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Program
99. Staircase Youth Services, Inc., Ludington, MI
100. South Bay Community Services, Chula Vista, CA
101. The Link, Minneapolis, MN
102. United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona, Tucson, AZ
103. Victoria Area Homeless Coalition, Victoria, TX
104. Volunteers of America of America Northern New England, Brunswick, ME
105. Youth and Shelter Services, Inc., Ames, IA
106. Youth Continuum, New Haven, CT
107. YouthLink, Minneapolis, MN
108. Youth OUrigh WNC, Inc., Asheville & Western NC

#### **STATE ORGANIZATIONS**

109. AO: Advocating Opportunity, OH
110. AMP Iowa
111. Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services (ALWAYS), Phoenix, AZ
112. Avenues for Homeless Youth, MN
113. California Coalition for Youth
114. Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
115. Children and Family Services of NH
116. Children's Home + Aid, IL
117. Coalition for Homeless Youth
118. Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking
119. Cocoon House, Everett, WA
120. Covenant House Pennsylvania
121. Covenant House Florida
122. Texans Care for Children, TX
123. The DC Center for the LGBT Community
124. Empire State Pride Agenda, NY
125. The Bridge for Youth, Minneapolis, MN
126. The Florida Network of Youth and Family Services
127. Family Resources, Inc., FL
128. Families On The Move, Inc., MI
129. Focus on Awareness and Information Resources of New York, Syracuse, NY
130. Georgia Alliance to End Homelessness, GA
131. Healing Place Serve, LA

132. Human Rights Advocacy Center, Inc., FL
133. Illinois Collaboration on Youth
134. Indian Oaks Academy, Manteno, UK
135. Indiana Youth Services Association, Indianapolis, IN
136. Lutheran Social Services of MN
137. Lutheran Social Services, WI
138. Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
139. North Little Rock School District, AR
140. Outreach Resource Centers, UT
141. Preble Street, Portland, ME
142. Reed City Housing Commission, Reed City, MI
143. Sparrow's Next NW MT
144. Student Advocacy Center of Michigan
145. The Mockingbird Society, WA
146. The Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc.
147. Training and Resources United to Stop Trafficking, AZ
148. Vermont Coalition of Runaway & Homeless Youth Programs
149. Youth Bridge, Fayetteville, AR
150. Youth Pride, Inc., RI
151. Youthworks, Bismarck and Fargo, ND
152. WI Association for Homeless and Runaway Services

#### **LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS**

153. Adventure Church, Kalispell, MT
154. Alameda Family Services, Alameda, CA
155. Alternative House, Fairfax, VA
156. Alternatives, Inc., Chicago, IL
157. Attention Homes, Boulder, CO
158. Avenues for Homeless Youth, Minneapolis, MN
159. Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center, Allentown, PA
160. Bill Wilson Center, San Jose, CA
161. Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley, Appleton, WI
162. Briarpatch Youth Services, Madison, WI
163. Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Boston, MA
164. Broward Human Trafficking Coalition, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
165. Cardinal McCloskey Community Services, Bronx, NY
166. Catholic Charities of Herkimer County, NY
167. Catholic Charities, Lubbock, TX
168. Center for Family Services, Camden, NJ
169. Center on Halsted, Chicago, IL
170. Central Texas Youth Services Bureau, Belton, TX
171. Children's Home Society of FL – WaveCREST Shelter, Fort Pierce, FL
172. Community Resources in Service to People, Winterset, IA
173. Compator, Inc., South Gate, CA
174. Compass House, Buffalo, NY
175. CORY Place, Inc., Bay City, MI

176. Covenant House NY, New York, NY
177. Crisis Center Inc., a Youth Service Bureau, Gary, IN
178. Crosswinds Youth Services, Cocoa, FL
179. Davis Chapel United Methodist Church, Piedmont, AL
180. Daybreak, Dayton, OH
181. Educational and Treatment Council, Inc., Lake Charles, LA
182. Evergreen Youth & Family Services, Bemidji, MN
183. Face to Face Health and Counseling Service, Inc., St. Paul, MN
184. Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District, Fairfield-Suisun, CA
185. Family Assistance Program, Victorville, CA
186. Familylinks, Inc., Pittsburgh, PA
187. Friends of Youth, Kirkland, WA
188. Gay & Lesbian Community Services of SE MN, Rochester, MN
189. Girls Educational and Mentoring Services, New York, NY
190. Give Them Wings, Inc., dba WINGS, Hood River, OR
191. Good Shepherd Services, New York, NY
192. Grand Rapids Public Schools, Grand Rapids, MI
193. HDC Project Reach Out, Superior, WA
194. Health care for the Homeless, Pittsburgh, PA
195. Hillcrest Youth Program, Kansas City, KS
196. Home Start, Inc., San Diego, CA
197. HPH Management, LLC, Lafayette, CO
198. Hudson Pride Connections Center, Jersey City, NJ
199. Human Development Center/ Project Reach Out, Duluth, MN
200. In Our Own Voice, Inc., Albany, NY
201. Interfaith Emergency Services, Ocala, FL
202. Introspect Youth Services, Inc., Chicago, IL
203. 1 in 10, Inc., Phoenix, AZ
204. Jackson Street Youth Shelter, Inc., Corvallis, OR
205. Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY
206. Juneau Youth Services, Juneau, AK
207. Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center, Kalamazoo, MI
208. Karis, Inc., Grand Junction, CO
209. Kenosha Human Development Services, Kenosha, WI
210. Kids in Crisis, Greenwich, CT
211. Kids in Need Youth Program, Rhinelander, WI
212. Krista THP+, Redding, CA
213. Larkin Street Youth Services, San Francisco, CA
214. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, New York, NY
215. LGBT Center of Raleigh, Raleigh, NC
216. LIFE Skills Foundation, Durham, NC
217. Lighthouse Youth Services, Inc., Cincinnati, OH
218. Lutheran Social Services SW RAYS, Baraboo, WI
219. Lutheran Social Services Youth Services, Brainerd, MN
220. Matrix Human Services, Detroit, MI

221. MCCNY Charities, Inc., New York, NY
222. Miami Coalition for the Homeless, Miami, FL
223. Montgomery County Youth Services, Conroe, TX
224. Morgan County System of Services, Inc., Decatur, AL
225. New Morning Youth & Family Services, Placerville, CA
226. Northland Family Help Center, Flagstaff, AZ
227. Northwest Family Services, Inc., Alva, OK
228. Oasis Center, Nashville, TN
229. Open Arms, Inc., Albany, GA
230. Open Door Youth Services, Green Bay, WI
231. Ozone House Youth and Family Services, Ann Arbor, MI
232. Pathfinders Milwaukee, Inc., Milwaukee, WI
233. PathWays PA, Holmes, PA
234. Porchfront Homes, Niwot, CO
235. Positive Alternatives, Inc., Menomonie, WI
236. Pride Center of Staten Island, Inc., Staten Island, NY
237. Pridelines Youth Services, South FL
238. Project Oz, McLean County, IL
239. Project 16:49, Janesville, WI
240. Project Reach, New York, NY
241. Project YES, Ceres, CA
242. Proud Haven, Inc., Pittsburgh, PA
243. Redwood Community Action Agency - Youth Service Bureau, Eureka, CA
244. Richmond Gay Community Foundation, Richmond, VA
245. Roanoke Diversity Center, Roanoke, VA
246. Safe Haven of Racine, Inc., Racine, WI
247. Sanctuary of Hope, Los Angeles, CA
248. Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc., Washington, DC
249. School District 27J, Brighton, CO
250. Shaw House, Bangor, ME
251. Social Advocates for Youth, Santa Rosa, CA
252. Somerville Homeless Coalition, Somerville, MA
253. Southern Nevada Children First, North Las Vegas, NV
254. StandUp for Kids, Chicago, IL
255. StandUp for Kids, Washington, DC
256. St. Pius V Parish, Chicago, IL
257. SunServe, Wilton Manors, FL
258. Tahoe Youth & Family Services, South Lake Tahoe, CA
259. Tamar Counseling Services, Upland, CA
260. Teens Alone, Hopkins, MN
261. The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT
262. The Gay and Lesbian Center of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas, NV
263. The HEAT Program, Brooklyn, NY
264. The Night Ministry, Chicago, IL
265. The Youth and Family Project, Inc., West Bend, WI

266. Urban Peak Colorado Springs, Colorado Springs, CO
267. Walker's Point Youth & Family Center, Milwaukee, WI
268. Livingston Family Center-The Connection Youth Services, Howell, MI
269. School District 27J, Brighton, CO
270. YMCA of San Diego County, San Diego, CA
271. YMCA Safe Place Services, Louisville, KY
272. Young Adult Guidance Center, Inc., Atlanta, GA
273. YouthCare, Seattle, WA
274. Youth Emergency Services, Omaha, NE
275. Youth In Need, St. Louis, MO
276. Youth Outreach Services, Inc., Chicago, IL
277. YouthLink, Minneapolis, MN
278. Youth Service Bureau of St. Joseph County, Inc., South Bend, IN
279. Youth Services Bureau of Monroe County, Bloomington, IL
280. Youth Services for Stephens County, Inc., Duncan, OK
281. Youth Services of Tulsa, Tulsa, OK