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The Honorable Marie Alvarado-Gil
Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services
1021 O Street, Room 7240
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 456 (Menjivar and Wiener) – Housing Vulnerable Youth - SUPPORT

Dear Senator Alvarado-Gil:

[Organization name] is pleased to support SB 456 (Menjivar and Wiener), which will combat homelessness and housing instability for California's most vulnerable youth. By expanding opportunities for service providers to apply directly for Homekey 2.0 youth set aside funds, SB 456 will increase the availability and accessibility of youth housing.

Add information about your organization and connection to this issue.

Housing instability and homelessness significantly hinder the pursuit of higher education, meaningful employment, and self-sufficiency for transition aged youth. For example, in Chapin Hall's CalYouth study, over 35% of youth reported they experienced homelessness while actively enrolled in extended foster care. And, 70.5% of California's unaccompanied homeless youth are unsheltered. Homelessness among some groups of youth is significantly disproportionate – up to 40 percent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+. Among racial and ethnic groups, African American youth were especially overrepresented, with an 83% increased risk of having experienced homelessness over youth of other races. Further, some data has shown that 50% of the chronically homeless population had their first experience of homelessness when they were under the age of 25.

The purpose of extended foster care is to prevent homelessness among youth as they enter early adulthood. However, without sufficient supported housing, youth are struggling to attain housing. Failure to support youth while they are in extended foster care and our transition aged youth experiencing homelessness results in increased chronic homelessness and disconnection as adults.

Non-profit organizations provide support to individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness through targeted services. Invested in improving communities, these organizations are experts in identifying the specific housing needs, gaps and coordinate efforts to support transition aged youth as they transition to stable housing.

This proposal builds on previous investments in creating safe and available housing for our state's at-risk youth by expanding opportunities for service providers to apply directly for the Homekey 2.0 youth set aside funds. Further, former foster youth have a right to reenter foster care at any time between the ages of 18-21, and do not need to go through the homeless system's coordinated entry system. Diverting former foster youth to county child welfare services is critical for timely reentry to foster care as these youth often require immediate assistance with housing, transportation, and food, and are at high risk for homelessness and aging out of eligibility for services.

SB 456 reduces the barriers community-based non-profit organizations and local governments face when developing permanent supportive housing or transitional housing for at-risk transition aged youth, including those experiencing homelessness and those with previous involvement with child welfare or probation and barriers young people encounter when trying to re-enter extended foster care. Removing artificial systems barriers will address both the pre-existing housing crisis and pressing housing needs for vulnerable transition aged youth. For the reasons noted above, [Organization] supports SB 456 and requests your support on the measure.

Sincerely,

[Name, Title]

cc: Members and Staff, Senate Committee on Human Services
Senator Menjivar
Senator Wiener