

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 30, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, and Education Appropriations  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, and Education Appropriations  
260 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

We write in support of funding for child and youth homelessness programs as you work to craft the subcommittee's fiscal year (FY) 2022 funding bill. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs, administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, and the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, administered by the Department of Education, provide vital assistance for community organizations, school districts, and public agencies around the country that serve homeless children and youth.

Addressing the needs of homeless children and youth is a life-saving investment. Homeless children and youth are at risk for developing physical, behavioral, and emotional problems, and many runaway and homeless youth are vulnerable to becoming victims of sex and labor trafficking. The opioid epidemic facing communities nationwide has also contributed to increased homelessness in children and youth, who often turn to substances when faced with the stresses of an unstable living arrangement. Without help, homeless youth often end up in the justice system, at a significant cost to taxpayers and communities. Providing a better path forward for homeless children and youth through housing, food and clothing, and access to education can save money and improve lives.

The RHYA and EHCY are the main federal programs addressing child and youth homelessness. Through the excellent work of local street outreach, shelter, and transitional living programs, RHYA has helped homeless youth receive the education, employment, personal savings, and family preservation services they need. With the support of EHCY grants, local education agencies can offer identification, enrollment, and transportation assistance, as well as academic support and connection to basic services. The EHCY program has given homeless children and youth the extra support they need to enroll and succeed in school.

We appreciate the Subcommittee's past support for these important programs. Continued resources directed to child and youth homelessness programs are essential to keeping pace with the increasing needs of these young people. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Education reported record numbers of youth homelessness in the 2018-2019 academic year, with more than 1.4 million youth experiencing homelessness. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this issue. With only a quarter of school districts receiving support through the EHCY program in a given year, it is clear that homeless children and youth are still under-identified and face significant barriers to school enrollment and education

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continuity. Additionally, only a quarter of applicants receive an RHYA grant due to the lack of funds and RHYA programs often turn away thousands of youth each year due to lack of available beds, leaving these children vulnerable without safe and stable housing and increasing their risk of predation and harm.

As you begin crafting the FY 2022 funding bill, we urge you to include continued and robust funding for the EHCY and RHYA programs. Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your support of programs to address child and youth homelessness.

Sincerely,

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Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator

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Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

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United States Senator

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United States Senator