

The Fostering Success in Education Amendment Senator Franken

Background: On average, foster youth move at least one to two times each year, and often change schools when they move. Research shows that their high rate of school mobility has a devastating impact on their educational outcomes. Each time foster youth move, they fall further and further behind in school. They end up scoring significantly lower than their peers on standardized tests and dropping out of school at higher rates. Moreover, changing school not only harms foster youth academically, but it also deprives them of relationships with their old friends and teachers at a time when foster youth need their support the most. Conversely, keeping foster children in their current schools can serve as a steadying force in their otherwise chaotic lives, and can limit the impact of traumatic events on their educational achievement.

Existing Law: In 2008, Congress passed the Fostering Connections Act—a child welfare law, which among other things aims to reduce the high rate of school mobility among foster youth. The law directs child welfare agencies to collaborate with local education agencies (LEAs) to enable foster children to remain in their current schools after they move to new school attendance areas when it is in their best interest. When it is not in their best interest, the law directs child welfare agencies to collaborate with LEAs to enroll these children immediately in new schools and transfer their school records.

The Fostering Success in Education Amendment goes further by calling for:

- **Collaboration to Ensure Educational Stability for Foster Children:** To implement the education improvements for children in Fostering Connections, child welfare agencies need the cooperation of state and local education agencies. The Fostering Success in Education Amendment would facilitate such cooperation by placing obligations on education agencies that complement those placed on child welfare agencies by Fostering Connections. Specifically, the amendment requires education agencies to work with child welfare agencies to keep foster children in their current schools when it is in the children's best interest, and to transfer them and their school records immediately when it is not.
- **Credit Transfer and Graduation:** The amendment requires states to put policies in place to ensure that foster youth who must change schools can transfer credits for coursework they have completed and earn diplomas. Foster children often find it challenging to transfer their course credits when they change schools. Even when credits transfer, some youth have difficulty earning diplomas because the number and nature of credits required for graduation at their new school may differ from those of their previous school.
- **Transportation:** The amendment requires child welfare agencies and state educational agencies to collaborate to develop a plan for transporting foster children to their schools of origin.
- **Points of Contact:** The amendment requires LEAs to designate point people to coordinate with their local child welfare agencies to promote school stability for foster children.
- **Data:** The amendment requires states to collect and report data on the academic achievement of foster youth to increase accountability for meeting their educational needs.