MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

A1777-B HEVESI -- Same as S5419-B BRISPORT

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to increasing from $300 a month to $725 a month the rent subsidy payable to a foster child living independently

The Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) strongly supports A.1777-B/S.5419-B sponsored by Assemblyman Hevesi and Senator Brisport which would increase the child welfare housing subsidy from a maximum of $300 a month to $725 a month, with future annual increases tied to inflation. In addition this bill increases the upper age limit from 21 to 24 for foster youth who are leaving care.

COFCCA is the principal representative for the not-for-profit organizations providing the majority of child welfare services in New York State. COFCCA and our member agencies are committed to meeting the needs and protecting the wellbeing of children and youth involved with the child welfare system.

Lack of adequate housing is a factor that not only can bring a family to the attention of the child welfare system, it can also be a barrier to reunification and discharge of a youth from care. The goal of the Child Welfare Housing Subsidy program is to help stabilize housing for families and youth aging out of foster care, yet the program has been providing just $300 a month, for a period up to three years since its creation in 1988. While the expense of rent, utilities and cost of living in New York State has increased exponentially. An increase in this program is more critical now than ever as families face additional threats to their housing security as a result of deepened economic hardship due to the COVID-19 crisis.

It is also critical that upper age limit be increased for eligibility for the child welfare housing subsidy provided to former foster youth so that more foster youth can have the resources to live independently, helping to address homelessness and housing insecurity.

COFCCA strongly supports A.1777-B/S.5419-B and encourages the Legislature to pass this bill. For more information please contact Michelle Newman, at mnewman@cofcca.org or (212) 929-2626.