



September 15, 2016

The Honorable Barbara Boxer  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

**SUBJECT: CALIFORNIA FOSTER YOUTH OPPOSE THE FAMILY FIRST PREVENTION SERVICES ACT UNLESS AMENDED**

## STATE

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## PROJECTS

**y.o.u.t.h.**  
TRAINING PROJECT

Dear Senator Boxer:

California Youth Connection (CYC) has taken an **OPPOSE UNLESS AMENDED** position on **H.R. 5456**, also known as the **Family First Prevention Services Act**, which would set an ineffective precedent for prevention services, threaten federal eligibility for countless youth, and eliminate a crucial housing resource for California foster youth on the cusp of transitioning to adulthood. Though we agree in concept with this legislation's stated aims – namely, limiting the reliance on congregate care facilities and ensuring families remain whole without unnecessary entrance into the system – we are nevertheless troubled by the unintended consequences it would create.

CYC is a youth-led organization composed of current and former foster youth who seek to empower one another and their communities while acting as advocates in transforming the foster care system through legislative, policy, and practice change. Over the course of the organization's near 30-year history, CYC has worked hard to not only establish as standard the direct participation of foster youth in all decisions being made about their lives but to also ensure other stakeholders recognize the inherent expertise and value of foster youth voice.

Despite the measure's overarching goals that mirror our own state's broad foster care reform effort, we fear some of its provisions as written would inadvertently worsen outcomes for youth. In particular, we are concerned that passage of the Act in its current form would result in:

1. An overly narrow set of prevention services that focuses on the needs of the parent that the child is being removed from while failing to provide any meaningful support for the relatives who the youth is likely to be living with during attempted rehabilitation
2. The risk of youth losing potential eligibility for federal foster care benefits upon entrance into foster care in cases where those very prevention services are unsuccessful
3. The loss of a vital transitional housing program in our state's system that some older youth actually prefer to either group homes or traditional family homes

The above-mentioned provisions offer youth and their families false "choices" between *either* prevention *or* support if prevention fails and, in the latter point's case, removes choice altogether. Given this flawed approach to prevention and inattention to instances of youth still entering care and needing support, **H.R. 5456** will put the stability of youth throughout our state in jeopardy. And that is unacceptable.



CALIFORNIA **YOUTH** CONNECTION  
Our Voices, Our Future

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CYC's position in this matter is rooted in our members' collective lived experience across the spectrum of foster care and in a desire to improve the experiences of those youth that come behind.

It is for these reasons that we must **OPPOSE H.R. 5456 UNLESS AMENDED.**

We thank you for your commitment to the vulnerable young people in our foster care system who our nation has taken responsibility for supporting and caring for.

Sincerely,

CYC's Youth Legislative Committee:

Ariella Grozbord, Yolo County, Northern Representative  
Mariah Corder, Santa Clara County, Bay Area Representative  
Neff Franks, San Francisco County, Bay Area Representative  
Katrina Quiroz, Kings County, Central Valley Representative  
Blade Oestreich, Merced County, Central Valley Representative  
Serena Skinner, Los Angeles County, Southern Representative  
Miguel Aguilar, Ventura County, Southern Representative

Kyle Sporleder  
Policy Director