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### **Many Foster Youth are Teen Parents – They Need Our Support**

National Foster Care Month in May was an opportunity for us to reflect on the systemic progress that has been achieved for youth in the foster care system. Most recently, the California Fostering Connections to Success Act (AB12) has extended support for youth in foster care from age 18 to age 21, giving youth crucial additional time to prepare for their transition to independence. The legislation has already had a significant impact on youth and the communities they live in, allowing more former foster youth to attend college, find adequate employment and housing, and build and sustain healthier relationships. But we need to keep foster youth in mind every month because there is more to be done.

“Sarah” is a youth living in our transitional housing placement program who became pregnant at age 17. She gave birth to a healthy baby girl and vowed to be a better parent than her parents were to her. However, because she lacks traditional family supports and because she is raising her daughter as a single mother, Sarah almost never gets time to herself, which has created a sense of resentment and impatience towards her child. Her goal in life is to graduate from high school and attend cosmetology school, but she cannot access subsidized childcare because she herself is in foster care. Until she has the ability to receive child care, Sarah’s dreams are on hold.

According to research from the University of Chicago, the extension of foster care to age 21 will nearly double the number of parenting foster youth. By age 21, 3 out of 4 young women in foster care will have experienced pregnancy, and history has shown that these youth and their children face dismal outcomes. Parenting and pregnant youth are 200% more likely to drop out of high school and their children are five times more likely to spend time in foster care.

Because this specialized population of foster youth faces severely limited options to receive support for themselves or for their children, Senator Leland Yee (D-San Francisco) introduced Senate Bill 528 to urge the California foster care system to do more to support parenting foster youth and their children. SB528 aims to prevent poverty, improve child outcomes and prevent unintended pregnancies by giving foster youth greater access to subsidized child care, expanding opportunities for youth to attend pregnant and parenting teen conferences, and providing age-appropriate reproductive health education to youth. Furthermore, SB528 will ensure that the Department of Social Services will collect more data on this population in order to better understand and serve them.

In order to make these goals a reality, SB 528 needs support from the community. To join the effort to ensure that foster youth and their children are prepared for the future once they transition out of care, please [send a letter of support](#) today. You can also [provide testimony](#) about the importance of SB 528 at the Assembly Human Services Committee. Together, we can bring better and brighter futures to young people in our communities.