

Senate Health & Human Services  
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 SB23-082 CO Fostering Success Voucher Program  
 Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Sheri Danz For Colorado Office of the Child's Representative	<p>My name is Sheri Danz and I am the Deputy Director of the Office of the Child’s Representative. Our office provides attorney services to youth in Dependency and Neglect cases throughout Colorado and to youth participating in Colorado’s Foster Youth in Transition Program. The OCR supports the creation of the Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program through SB 23-082.</p> <p>Through the case assignment and support our office provides to attorneys representing youth who participate in Colorado’s Foster Youth in Transition Program, the OCR has become aware of the issues and challenges young people who participate in the program face. Housing routinely and consistently comes up as a challenge in our case staffings and discussions. An essential human need, safe, stable, and predictable housing is key to the immediate and long-term safety and success of participating youth. Unfortunately, sufficient affordable housing resources do not exist in Colorado, and many youth continue to have only short-term and piecemeal options to fulfill their housing needs. Limited availability and eligibility requirements of existing federal housing vouchers often prevent youth from accessing this essential support. Lack of housing not only impacts youths’ immediate safety and well-being but also presents significant obstacles to their educational and employment opportunities.</p> <p>SB 23-082 provides one more housing possibility for some of Colorado’s most vulnerable youth. The OCR appreciates the flexibility that these housing vouchers will offer and believes that such flexibility is critical to meeting the real needs of Colorado’s youth. These vouchers are both compatible with and complimentary to Colorado’s Foster Youth in Transition Program, in that youth who participate in the program, opt out of the program, and age out of the program may access these vouchers. This flexibility will allow counties and case management agencies to respond to youth voice and youth choice in helping meet their basic needs. The OCR appreciates the work and thought that has gone into conceptualizing this program and is excited for its implementation. We ask for a “yes” vote on this important bill.</p>