



HB 21-1084: Drivers' Licenses for Foster Children

Rep. Exum, Rep, Van Winkle, and Sen. Hisey

April 20, 2021

Madame Chair and Members of the Senate Local Government Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 21-1084.

My name is Abbie Kell, and I serve as Mile High United Way's Independent Living Coach for the Bridging the Gap program. Mile High United Way (MHUW) has the distinct honor of being the very first United Way in the world. For over 133 years, we have been working to ensure better opportunities for everyone in Metro Denver, which includes the youth I am honored to work with: the young people transitioning to adulthood from foster care and the Department of Youth Services.

Bridging the Gap is a housing voucher program that provides wrap around services, including education and training, employment assistance, and mental health support – all to help our youth become self-sufficient and independent. HB21-1084 is an essential piece of independence that we see missing in our young adults in the Bridging the Gap program. We have participants who struggle every day getting to and from appointments whether it is for themselves or their children.

We strongly support this bill. Being able to drive is considered a privilege. And it is a privilege that should be available to our youth exiting the child welfare system. Having a driver's license creates a sense of normalcy and independence for our young people, that helps ease their transition into adulthood.

The need for this bill reminds me of one of our participants. We helped her get into a driving instruction program and get a vehicle. Before this, she was riding the bus for two hours a day to get to school, work, and drop her child off at daycare. But now, she has a reliable way to get herself to her appointments and ensure her child benefits from early care and education.

Acquiring a driver's license is an important rite of passage that is essential for our young people on their path to self-sufficiency.

Thank you for your consideration and we strongly urge a "yes" vote on HB21-1084.

Sincerely,

Abbie Kell
Independent Living Coach, Bridging the Gap
Mile High United Way