



April 2023

To: House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee
Re: SB23-082— Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program

Dear Committee Members,

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is one of the oldest women's organizations in the country, empowering women since 1881. The mission of AAUW is to advance equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy.

AAUW recognizes that young women coming out of the foster care program are especially vulnerable to becoming homeless and experiencing mental and physical health crises—issues that have been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic.

We believe SB 82 will provide substantial help in the form of housing vouchers and case management services.

With so many of our youth in crisis, SB 82 is needed now.

For these reasons, AAUW of Colorado strongly supports this bill and requests your YES vote in committee and throughout the process of becoming law.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Su Ryden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Su Ryden
AAUW of Colorado Public Policy Co-Director

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American Association of University Women--AAUW is a top-rated 501(c)3 charitable organization whose mission is to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.



April 18, 2023

Colorado General Assembly
Colorado State Capitol Building
200 E. Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Honorable Members of the House Public and Behavioral Health and Human Services Committee,

Raise the Future submits this letter indicating support of Senate Bill 23-082, Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program. At Raise the Future, we believe every child deserves to have a caring adult by their side. Raise the Future works with youth in the foster care system to help them find permanency and connections to a caring adult. We surround those families with the support they need to minimize the chances the placement will fail, and the youth be again relinquished to the foster care system. The children we serve are those with extensive involvement in the child welfare system - including multiple placements and complex trauma histories, and in many cases, traditional efforts to attain permanency have failed. These youth are typically older than nine, have complex emotional, behavioral, and physical challenges, and include members of sibling groups, children of color, and LGBTQ+ youth.

At Raise the Future we get up every day because we believe every child deserves to have a caring adult by their side and we know that's not the case in Colorado and the Rocky Mountain west where we work. As CEO, I get to work with 10 recruiters in Colorado, who work with over 100 kids who meet the description just described. What keeps our recruiters up at night is thinking about what happens if they are unable to find a placement for these young people. Recruiters know that of the youth who age out, 50% are unemployed; 25% become incarcerated; 71% end up pregnant, and that's just in the first two to three years. Raise the Future supports Senate Bill 82 because while we want to place more and more children with permanent connections, our staff sleep better at night knowing the state is behind them and SB 82 will help support the kids who cannot be placed.

Sincerely,

Ann Ayers
CEO
720-560-0444; ann.ayers@raisethefuture.org

Connect Youth. Support Families. Create Hope.

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House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services
04/18/2023 01:30 PM
SB23-082 CO Fostering Success Voucher Program
Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Ashley Chase For Office of the Child's Representative</p>	<p>Hello, my name is Ashley Chase, I am a staff attorney and legislative liaison at 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>