MEMO OF SUPPORT
A04258 (Hevesi) / S04339 (Salazar)

Child Welfare Rent Subsidies to Individuals Living with Roommates Bill

September 4, 2019

Children’s Defense Fund-NY (CDF) strongly supports A04258/S04339, which would amend Social Services Law to improve the effectiveness of New York’s existing child welfare housing subsidy.

Our Leave No Child Behind mission is to ensure every child a healthy start, a head start, a fair start, a safe start and a moral start in life, and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. We provide a strong, effective and independent voice for all the children of America who cannot vote, lobby or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor children, children of color and those with disabilities. In New York, we are dedicated to improving conditions for children across the State, based on research, public education, policy development, organizing and advocacy activities. Our priorities are health, education, early childhood, youth justice and child welfare.

A04258/S04339 would permit vulnerable families and youth aging out of foster care to use the state’s existing child welfare rent subsidies when living with roommates. This includes families with open CPS investigations, families receiving preventive services, families where children are reunifying from foster care, and youth ages 18 to 21 who are aging out of custody—all of whom face significant risks of housing instability and homelessness.

Current administration of the subsidy prohibits its use in situations where recipients live with roommates, resulting in the subsidy being underutilized by eligible families and youth. This legislation would eliminate this barrier to housing support by explicitly permitting such use. Ensuring the flexibility of these existing funds to support living arrangements that include roommates promises to expand the utility of the subsidy, supporting stable housing for more children and families. This bill is a valuable strategy for addressing poverty in New York State, which drives families’ contact with the child welfare system, by supporting housing for vulnerable children and older youth within our communities.

CDF urges the governor to sign A04258/S04339 into law.

For additional information, please contact Julia L. Davis, Esq., Director of Youth Justice and Child Welfare, Children’s Defense Fund-New York, jrdavis@childrensdefense.org, 212.697.0882.