



Public Health Committee
Monday, March 29th, 2021

Written testimony in regards to
H.B. No 6666 An Act Concerning The Department Of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions To The Public Health Statutes

Teth Pickens
Youth Action Council, Journey Home

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Anwar, Senator Kushner, Representative Gilchrest, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for considering my testimony in support of Sec. 70 Section 7-36 of H.B. No 6666 An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions to the Public Health Statutes

My name is Teth Pickens and I am a member of the Youth Action Council (YAC) working through Journey Home and I also participate in activities with the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut. Journey Home helps coordinate the efforts to end homelessness and support systems of homeless services and housing in the Capitol region, known as the Coordinated Access Networks- which is what the YAC plays a part in providing feedback for in order to improve programs and access to services. The YAC's involvement is in providing feedback to leadership and direct care staff at partner agencies that provide emergency shelter, outreach, youth navigation, and housing. YAC members have lived experience, and as a result can help identify gaps in programs and suggest ways to make helpful changes. For youth experiencing homelessness, access to and obtaining legal identification documents is one such gap and a critical barrier that stands in the way of overcoming homelessness and achieving self-sufficiency. I am in support of H.B. No 6666 on behalf of all youth who experience homelessness in Connecticut every year, and who, like me, did not always stay in shelters and needed access to ID documents.

The revisions in Sec. 70 Section 7-36 will allow youth aged 15-24 experiencing homelessness, as verified by their school or a provider, to obtain a copy of their birth certificate and a state ID for free. The revision also specifies a definition of homelessness consistent with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Currently, state law allows a fee waiver for individuals who are residents of a homeless shelter or other facility for homeless persons (CGS sec. 1-1h). As mentioned, I am a young adult with lived experience, and I know first hand that many homeless youth do not stay in shelters. Accessing ID documents is just as important for these youth as those who are in shelters. Without ID, youth have difficulty accessing services and engaging in activities that will help improve their situation such as obtaining employment, housing, and accessing other benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your continued support to make sure that youth homelessness in CT is rare, brief, and one-time.

Sincerely,

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