

**Allison Scobie-Carroll, LICSW, MBA, President**  
**Rebekah Gewirtz, MPA, Executive Director**

June 11, 2019

State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz  
Joint Committee on Children, Families and PWD  
24 Beacon St, Room 111  
Boston, MA 02133

State Representative Kay Khan  
Joint Committee on Children, Families and PWD  
24 Beacon St, Room 146  
Boston, MA 02133

**In Support of S.35/H. 124 “An Act ensuring continuous healthcare coverage for youth who have aged-out of the Department of Children and Families”**

Dear Chairs Chang-Diaz, Khan and members of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities:

The MA Chapter of NASW (National Association of Social Workers) is the largest professional social work organization in the state. In representing social workers that serve youth who are engaged in DCF services, both inside and outside of the agency, we urge you to **support S.35/H.124** in its entirety.

Youth who are either in DCF custody or otherwise engaged in services provided by the agency are a high-risk, underserved population. Eighty percent of children in the foster care system have a chronic medical condition and are twice as likely to have depression as their peers who are not in foster care. These children use mental health services at a rate 15-20 times higher than the general pediatric population.

Unfortunately, by the time enrolled youth turn 18, they choose to opt out of continuing to receive DCF services for a variety of reasons, often due to trauma and general mistrust of adults and those in authoritative positions. When they opt out of DCF, they are also opting out of receiving health care insurance, even though this population is often high utilizers of both physical and mental health services, as the figures above show. Furthermore, once youths age out, they will often struggle with poverty, incarceration and unemployment. This includes finding employers that provides health insurance coverage.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, all eligible youths are able to stay on existing healthcare plans until the age of 26 which has greatly helped young adults receive access to reliable, safe and affordable healthcare. Children who are engaged in DCF services should be provided that same opportunity. We urge you to report this out of committee favorably without delay.

Please let us know if we can provide any further information that will help you in your deliberations. You can reach Rebekah Gewirtz at [rgewirtz.naswma@socialworkers.org](mailto:rgewirtz.naswma@socialworkers.org) and Sophie Hansen at [shansen.naswma@socialworkers.org](mailto:shansen.naswma@socialworkers.org).

Thank you,

Rebekah Gewirtz, MPA  
Executive Director

Sophie Hansen, LCSW  
Political Director