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119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7995

To update the purposes of the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood to reflect research and the input of youth with lived experience about the importance of long-term relationships to future success.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 19, 2026

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin (for herself and Mr. CAREY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means

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A BILL

To update the purposes of the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood to reflect research and the input of youth with lived experience about the importance of long-term relationships to future success.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Chafee Opportunities for New Networks and Existing Connection Trust Act'' or the ''CONNECT Act''.

SEC. 2. UPDATING THE PURPOSES OF THE JOHN H. CHAFEE FOSTER CARE PROGRAM FOR SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD.

(a) UPDATING OF PURPOSES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 477(a) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 677(a)) is amended—

(A) by striking paragraph (2);

(B) by redesignating paragraphs (1) and (3) through (7) as paragraphs (3) through (8), respectively; and

(C) by inserting after ''conducted—'' the following:

''(1) to help children who have experienced foster care at age 14 or older to develop and maintain sustained, supportive relationships with adults (including kin or fictive kin who are not serving as placement), mentors, and peers (including peers who have experienced foster care), with a goal of providing multiple and varied paths to reduce isolation and ensuring that the youth develop lifelong connections and support networks;

''(2) to support youth still in foster care who have experienced foster care at age 14 or older in exercising the rights referred to in section 475A to participate in developing their permanency plan and receive written information about available services

and steps the agency is taking to support the plan, as well as to facilitate pre- and post-permanency peer support, mentoring, connections with kin, and referrals to additional appropriate programs and services to help youth achieve their permanency goals;''.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on the date that is 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) GUIDANCE.—Within 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act and after consulting with youth with lived experience in foster care, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall issue guidance to States and Tribal child welfare agencies, regarding the purposes set forth in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 477(a) of the Social Security Act, that includes, at a minimum—

(1) examples of services and support eligible for Federal funding under part B of title IV of such Act, under part E of such title as part of completing and following the case plan requirements provided for in section 475A of such Act, or under section 477 of such Act, including individual youth support, family support, and peer support to engage youth during reunification, guardianship, or adoption proceedings;

(2) best practices for facilitating peer support, mentoring, and the development and maintenance of lifelong connections, including practices that support sibling, tribal, and community connections, including minimum qualifications and training for persons providing mentoring and peer support;

(3) standards of outreach to and notification of eligible youth, including youth with a planned permanent living arrangement, to ensure referrals to appropriate programs and services; and

(4) protocols for documentation of support and relationship-building activities under section 477 of such Act that are required by section 475A of such Act to be included in a child's case plan, sufficient to permit review under the case review system described in section 475(5) of such Act.

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