

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 3, 2014

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-1475

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretaries Duncan and Sebelius,

We are writing today with concern regarding our nation's current and former foster youth and their educational outcomes, specifically that only three percent of foster youth graduates from college. There are nearly 400,000 children currently in our foster system due to abuse or neglect and every year more than 23,000 of those children age out of the system with no place to call home.

We are aware of and appreciate the changes that have been made to the Federal Student Aid website to include information and a one-pager specifically focused on foster youth and resources available to them, including the Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) through the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.

While this information is an improvement to the site, we are concerned that it does little good if few people know it is there. We ask that the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services coordinate dissemination efforts to reach foster youth and provide them with information about the resources that have been created to help them succeed. We hear all too often from current and former foster youth that they were simply never informed about programs meant to help them, and some of their challenges could have instead been opportunities if better coordinated information was accessible early on.

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We would like to know what your plans and timeline are for publicizing this information to foster youth, child welfare agencies, high schools, colleges, advocacy and mentoring networks, individuals and institutions charged with ensuring the well-being and future success of foster youth.

Such efforts could include newsletters, blog postings, technical assistance workshops and conferences, webinars, and inclusion in other communication sent to a wide variety of stakeholders- specifically those who interact directly with youth.

We would appreciate an update on your efforts to coordinate between your agencies to improve foster youth higher education outcomes and look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Donna Petersen

James W. Grady

Richard Blumenthal

Maynard Jackson

Jimmy Baldwin

Ben Card

Jay Byrnes

Heidi Heitkamp

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Al Franken

Chuck Grassley

Ken Wyden

Paula Hawkins

Patty Murray

Tim Wirth