
Bill Analysis 2019 Regular Session**SPONSOR:** Senators Michael Padilla and Candace Gould**SHORT TITLE:** Fostering Connections Act

SYNOPSIS OF BILL: The proposed legislation allows young people to opt into age-appropriate supports up to age 21. Those who opt in will remain under the legal jurisdiction of the children's court, allowing them continued and uninterrupted access to age-appropriate supports like case-management, living stipends that can be used to continue living in a licensed foster home or independently, and court review to ensure stakeholder compliance and youth well-being. Extended care provides these young people more time to finish school, develop skills to be successful adults, and build supportive networks and social capital.

STRENGTHS: Young people in supervised state systems often find themselves without the support of a stable family and are often denied the chance to participate in everyday teenage activities. At age 18, they leave these systems without the life experiences and family supports to become successful adults. National data from Annie E. Casey Foundation and others report that:

- More than 20% experience homelessness at age 18
- 42% will not graduate high school by age 19 (compared to 13% in the general population)
- 54% are unemployed by age 26
- 64% of males and 33% of females will be involved in the justice system

ADDITIONAL INFO: New Mexico already uses state funds to provide independent living stipends to some youth who age out of foster care at age 18. This legislation creates an aftercare services program that meets the criteria to receive federal Title IV-E funds, and New Mexico will join the 26 states across the country that have already implemented similar legislation. The cost will be \$1.35 million in new state general fund dollars per year. This expenditure will allow the state to take advantage of \$1.06 million available in federal Title IV-E funds. By leveraging Title IV-E funds, the state will free up Chafee funds in the current budget to further invest in extending aftercare support services to age 21.

<u>S</u>afer	<u>A</u>political	<u>F</u>iscally-Responsible	<u>E</u>vidence Based	Grade
<p>By allowing young people to opt into services (as opposed to mandated services), this bill would likely increase community safety because young people will be more inclined to fully participate. This bill makes it more likely that young people will have the support they need to successfully transition out of supervised state systems by giving young people additional time to finish school and build supportive connections.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>The cost of implementing these changes is minimal compared to the benefit young people will receive, plus the bill would allow additional federal dollars to flow into New Mexico.</p>	<p>The statistics for youth in state supported services are bleak. By providing optional services up to age 21, this bill gives young people more time build connections and become established. Community connections, employment, and safe housing are widely understood to be some of the basic pillars for success.</p>	<p>A</p>