



National Center for Youth Law

**Juvenile
Law** advancing the rights and
Center well-being of children in jeopardy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 16, 2015

Contact:
Jesse Hahnel, 510-835-8098 x3003

Groundbreaking Booker Amendment Shines a Spotlight on the Educational Needs of Homeless Students and Foster Youth

Washington, DC - The United States Senate has approved a groundbreaking amendment to the Every Child Achieves Act, a bi-partisan bill reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). An amendment led by Senator Corey Booker (D-NJ) requires states, for the first time, to analyze data on the graduation rates of homeless students and students in foster care. The ESEA is a key federal law governing education, originally signed into law in 1965, and reauthorized as No Child Left Behind in 2002.

The amendment requires states to include foster youth and homeless youth as subgroups when disaggregating graduation data. The current version of ESEA requires the disaggregation of data for various sub-groups including African-Americans, English Learners and Special Needs students. Disaggregating student data into subpopulations can help schools, districts and states see important trends in graduation and use limited resources where they are needed most.

Including foster youth as a subgroup will document and make public, for the first time, the extent of the foster youth achievement gap in this country. It will create an incentive for states to share data between their child welfare and education agencies, so that the education agency knows which students are in foster care.

“Numerous studies have found the educational outcomes of students in foster care to be tragically poor, and recent studies in California show that foster youth perform significantly worse than all other disadvantaged groups,” said Jesse Hahnel, Director of FosterEd, an initiative of the National Center for Youth Law. “Disaggregating foster student data will allow states and districts to measure the efficacy of policies and programs intended to close the foster youth achievement gap.”

“Senator Booker’s amendment is a tremendous step forward for foster youth and homeless youth - it’s also a smart investment for taxpayers,” said Katherine Burdick of Juvenile Law Center.

Juvenile Law Center, The National Center for Youth Law, the ABA Center on Children and the Law, Education Law Center-PA and the National Working Group on Foster Care collaborated to help educate Senate staff on the importance of including provisions specific to homeless students and students in foster care. “We appreciate Senator Booker’s attention to this issue and look forward to continuing to work with him to ensure that students in foster care receive the supports they need to succeed in school,” said Hahnel.

This amendment builds upon the requirement to disaggregate data on student test scores, a priority also sought by these advocates that was previously included in this bill.

###