



The Honourable John Horgan  
Premier of British Columbia  
Via email: [Premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Premier@gov.bc.ca)

Dear Premier Horgan,

**Re: BC Budget 2021 – Investments in Supporting Youth Transitions from Care**

We are the Fostering Change Campaign Organizers, supported by the Fostering Change Campaign, hosted by First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition. We are alumni of government care, who have lived expertise, and we continue to ask the BC Government, our parents, to support and empower all youth in and from care. We are asking for the implementation of comprehensive and universal supports in tuition waiver eligibility and other supports for youth transitioning from care.

We know from *Opportunities in Transition: An Economic Analysis of Investing in Youth Aging out of Foster Care* that the costs of adverse outcomes for youth aging out of care are between \$222 and \$268 million for the cohort of 1,000 youth aging out each year — plus significant intangible costs, like premature loss of life. The jarring statistic of premature deaths is reflected in the 2018 report, *BC Coroners Service Death Review Panel: Review of MCFD-Involved Youth Transitioning to Independence*. BC's youth in and from care died at five times the rate of the general population of young people.

We know our goals align with your vision of making life better for youth aging out of care, by improving service delivery and to make life more affordable to ensure equitable opportunity for all youth in and from care. On April 12th, 2018, you committed to expanding and improving supports to youth transitioning from care through the development of an action plan created by the cross-ministry working group. On October 23, 2019, you built on that commitment by meeting with our youth representatives, listening to our stories, and spending more than the allotted meeting time with us. These actions have shown us your dedication to our community's well-being.

Our community of current and former youth in care in BC continues to experience adverse outcomes leaving care, and the most disturbing statistic continues to be reflected in premature deaths. Those lost lives are part of the hundreds of youth who miss out on programs such as Agreements with Young Adults (AYA), because they are deemed ineligible by numerous constraints, such as age and relationship status with their current social worker. Faced with poverty, adverse health outcomes, and the isolation of losing all support at age nineteen, these youth are not able to reach their full potential. Further, many youth from care are survivors of intergenerational trauma, and the lack of government support can result in further trauma. Tragically and ironically, this trauma and lack of resources can then make youth ineligible for support. We know that this feedback loop is entirely preventable, and many lives can be improved — and saved — with better supports.

We recognize the number of programs that benefit youth in and from care, and there have been recent improvements to the programs to make them more accessible. For example, due to the pandemic, the Ministry of Child and Family Development has implemented a more flexible approach to the AYA and

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Life Skills programs. The changes implemented draw on the lived expertise of several youth and youth-serving organizations in the community and, though these changes are temporary and only guaranteed for a few months, we know they are set to benefit many youth for much longer. Extended and expanded supports are investments in the future, and our community, allies, and stakeholders of Fostering Change imagine the following as solutions to youth ineligibility for Agreements with Young Adults, Life Skills Programs and Tuition Waivers:

- Remove policy barriers including the age cap and minimum in-care time period for the Agreements with Young Adults and Tuition Waivers programs.
- Guarantee equitable access to start-up costs, including counselling, to help make the transition into adulthood a dignified experience.
- Continue the expansion of the Temporary Life Skills program changes that make Life Skills now accessible to youth in and from care, because it meets youth where they are at, not where society thinks they should be.
- Implement a universal bundle of supports so all youth from care can have the opportunity to pursue educational, training, therapeutic or life skills programs.

Youth in and from care look to government leaders as their parents, and while we recognize you have a multitude of obligations in British Columbia, your children and youth deserve to be at the forefront when considering the next budget. The new fiscal year brings new opportunities to the members of your constituency and an investment creates opportunity for us to not just survive but thrive.

In the spirit of collaboration to increase youth well-being in transitions,

Susan Russell and Anita Shen  
Fostering Change Community Organizers