Foster Care
&
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Lasting Solutions

2019 Governor Summer Internship Program

Larry Hogan, Governor
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**Steven H. Benden**  
Director, Strategy and Performance  
Office of the Secretary  
Maryland Department of Human Services

**Mary Kendall**  
Assistant Director, Planning and Policy  
State Revitalization Programs  
Division of Neighborhood Revitalization  
Department of Housing and Community Development

**Allen Blackwell**  
Homeless and Foster Care Liaison  
Baltimore City Public Schools

**John McGinnis**  
Pupil Personnel and School Social Worker Specialist  
Maryland State Department of Education; Division of Student, Family, and School Support

**Dana S. Burl**  
Director, Outreach and Advocacy  
Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs

**Amanda Miller**  
Senior Program Specialist  
University of Maryland School of Social Work: The Institute for Innovation and Implementation

**Monisha Cherayil**  
Attorney  
Public Justice Center

**Katherine Mundorf**  
Performance Officer, Office of Strategy & Performance  
Maryland Department of Human Services

**Natalie Clements**  
Policy Analyst  
Department of Labor

**Erin Roth**  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Department of Labor

**Keri-Ann Henson**  
Homeless Education Program Administrator  
Department of Student Services  
Frederick County Public Schools

**Hannah Schmitz**  
Assistant Director  
Public Service Scholars Programs  
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

**Elizabeth Hoey**  
Program Specialist  
University of Maryland School of Social Work: The Institute for Innovation and Implementation

**Sacsheen Scott**  
Project Manager  
Office of Community Services Programs  
Division of Neighborhood Revitalization  
Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development

**Steve Holt**  
Assistant Director  
Homelessness Solutions Program

**Heather Sheridan**  
Associate Director of Homelessness Initiatives  
Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development

**Laura Hussey**  
Professor of Political Science  
University of Maryland Baltimore College

**Christina Drushel Williams**  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Governor’s Office for Children

**Steven Youngblood**  
Director of Foster Care Policy and Practice  
Department of Human Services
Executive Summary

Studies have found that there are 17,429 homeless school aged youth (this number includes unaccompanied homeless youth\(^1\)), 2,336 unaccompanied homeless youth between the ages of 18-24, and approximately 4,000 youth in the foster care system in Maryland. Unfortunately, the estimated number of foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth is not representative of the true population due to the large number of youth that remain unidentified and the definition differences among agencies and organizations. Current efforts to help this population seek higher education and job opportunities include the Maryland Tuition Waivers, The Maryland Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV), The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and the formation of a new unaccompanied homeless youth workgroup to study barriers and supportive services.

The multi-layered barriers that these youth face make attaining higher education and stable employment difficult. To supplement and improve the work that is already taking place, this proposal recommends three solutions to address the lack of post-graduation opportunities for this population: (1) Pilot three transitional liaison positions in Maryland counties to help navigate students through the process of transitioning to higher education or a job path, (2) Develop a pilot program, beginning in three public universities, that establishes year-long housing for students that use the Maryland Tuition Waivers or the Maryland Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV), and (3) Establish a P\(^3\) state-wide mandated plan that ensures that foster care and unaccompanied youth in high school have access to specialized advisors and available resources that help them transition from high school. The policy solutions are analyzed by considering the cost, short and long-term effectiveness, political feasibility, widest reach, and

\(^1\) The McKinney-Vento Act defines an unaccompanied homeless youth as a youth who has no “fixed, regular, and adequate” living situation and who is “not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian” (National Center for Homeless Education, 2012)
what implementation challenges there will be. Following the analysis and considerations, this report recommends: The P³ state-wide mandated program.

Introduction

Though Maryland strongly values education for all, foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth are populations that are continuously left behind. According to the National Working Group on Foster Care and Education multi-state study, in 2012, 84% of foster care students graduating high school wanted to attend college, but only 20% were actually able to. Of the 20% who started college, only 2-9% earned their bachelor’s degree. While there is no data on the number of foster care students in college in Maryland, this portrays an estimated scope of the problem in Maryland. In the United States (U.S), there are at least 415,000 children in foster care. In Maryland, there are at least 4,000 youth in foster care (MSDE). According to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), foster care is defined as “[...] the 24 hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the Child Welfare Agency (CWA) has placement and care responsibility.” If a child is in the foster care system by the age of thirteen, they are eligible to stay in the system until they are twenty-two.

In the 2016-17 school year, there were 17,429 homeless students in Maryland (MSDE), approximately 2,336 of which are unaccompanied (National Center for Homeless Education). To help these students seek opportunity, three solutions have been proposed. The first proposal is to create three transitional liaison positions in Eastern, Central, and Western Maryland counties who will help navigate students through the process of transitioning to college, or a career path by promoting awareness of different services available to them, and how to access those services. The second solution is to develop a pilot program, beginning in three public universities, that establishes year-long housing for students that either have the Maryland Tuition Waivers for Foster Care Recipients and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth or the ETV. Lastly, the third policy
solution will increase public awareness of resources available to foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth in schools through a P³ project (posters, pamphlets, and presentations). It will establish a P³ state-wide mandated plan that ensures that foster care and unaccompanied youth entering high school have access to specialized trained counselors who can help them in their transition process in and following high school by educating them on resources available. By developing these innovative and sustainable policy solutions for foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth, post high school graduation opportunities will be created for this population. Therefore, they will be able to reach their full potential as Maryland residents and global citizens.

**Problem Definition**

Foster care youth and unaccompanied homeless youth are vulnerable individuals who lack a traditional family support system and/or a home. Young people find themselves in the foster care system or situations of homelessness due to a number of reasons including family circumstances, abuse, and rejection based on characteristics such as sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, etc. (Youth Reach MD, 2018, pg. 5). These two populations are often intertwined, as young people switch from one status to the other depending on their current situation. According to the 2013 Taskforce Report on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, studies estimated that 12-36% of youth ages 18-21 exiting the foster care system in the United States become homeless (Governor’s Office for Children, 2013, pg.11). Instability and lack of resources result in a cyclical pattern of homelessness or unstable housing which are hard to escape from.

One of the greatest challenges when addressing this population is the various non-inclusive definitions of foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth that restrict certain individuals from receiving resources. Since definitions vary across agencies and organizations, it
is difficult to determine the number of youth who are unaccompanied homeless or in foster care. For example, in 2018, Youth Reach MD did their annual youth homelessness count in collaboration with participating Maryland Continuums of Care (CoC)\(^2\) and the results are “understood as a representative sample that gives us the best understanding to date of the characteristics and nature of youth homelessness in Maryland”\(\text{(Youth Reach MD, 2018, pg. 18)}\). Out of the individuals surveyed, they found 1,033 individuals experiencing unstable housing or homelessness, and of those 1,033 young people, “816 met the Youth REACH MD definition of unaccompanied homeless youth. Only 31 percent of youth who met the Youth REACH MD definition of unaccompanied homeless youth would also meet the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)” \(\text{(Youth Reach MD, 2018, pg. 18)}\). With variation in definitions, it is difficult to capture the true scope of the problem and to provide all necessary services to the youth in need.

The lack of stability in the lives of youth in foster care or youth experiencing homelessness creates barriers to accessing educational tools which leads to difficulty completing school. It is necessary to address the needs of these students in order to ensure that there is an increased number of high school graduates, students finding career opportunities, and/or going on to some type of higher education. These students often lack food, have unstable housing, experience abuse, and have little to no access to other necessary resources. The 2018 Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) four-year cohort graduation rates indicate that 87% of high school students graduate, thereby having the ability to explore careers options or higher education \(\text{(Salmon, 2019)}\). According to MSDE, only around 65% of youth in the foster care system graduate from high school at year 12 \(\text{(Maryland State Department of Education)}\). Of that

\(\text{\footnotesize\text{2A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates funding for housing and services benefiting homeless families and individuals. They are funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and are responsible for implementing the Youth Count locally. (Youth Reach MD, 2018)}}\)
percentage, only a small number of students go on to some type of secondary education (National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2014). Figure 1 shows a 2018 breakdown of the 38% of youth in the Reach Count that reported being in school (Fig.1). The chart shows that of that 38% in school, only 49% of the youth have education up to or past their high school diploma or GED (Fig.1).

Foster care youth and unaccompanied homeless youth lack opportunities in almost all aspects of their lives, but the area this proposal attempts to address is in education. Training, sustainable employment, and higher education can be leveraged as tools to increase an individual's potential to sustain a job, make a living wage, and have a home, which is why it is critical to develop initiatives that promote these opportunities.

Origins of the Problem

There are a number of reasons that youth to go into foster care or become unaccompanied and homeless, most of which are beyond their control. What ties these two groups together is the family dysfunction that originates from their home and affects their transition into adulthood. Family dysfunctions could be anything from parental neglect or abuse, to incarceration of family members, or illnesses within the family that take a toll on the guardians and make them unfit to care for their child. Due to the lack of a stable home, these youth are exposed to an increased risk of violence, human trafficking, and exploitation, which results in a series of mental health problems or drug abuse (MDHCD). With these kind of circumstances, the education of these youth fall through the cracks.
According to the Department of Human Services (DHS) report on “Maryland’s 2018 Profile Transition-Age Youth in Foster Care,” 35% of Maryland’s foster care youth are ages 14+, meaning that from middle school to high school a youth is removed from their home and placed into the foster care system. In addition to the trauma of leaving their home, a foster care youth could also experience “frequent moving placements, multiple school changes, educational inconsistency, poor communication among schools, caseworkers and students, and delays in school enrollment” (NCSL, “Supporting Older Youth in Foster Care”). These circumstances put the youth at a disadvantage compared to their peers and the statistics of Maryland’s foster care youth educational attainment indicates this disparity. According to the same DHS report, only 78% of foster care youth attain their high school diplomas compared to 92% of Maryland’s general population. Therefore, there is a disconnect between the home and the school.

In the case of an unaccompanied youth, their circumstances differ slightly because they have no form of assigned caseworkers. According to the National Center for Homeless Education, “many youth experience homelessness after running away from a foster care placement or aging out of the foster care system.” Thus, unaccompanied youth are at a higher risk of being set back with their progress in school because of situational instabilities that lead to homelessness. According to the 2018 Youth REACH report, between the ages of 18-24, only 30% of the unaccompanied youth surveyed have graduated from high school, 9% have attained a GED, and 10% have either pursued a higher education or went into the workforce or explored vocational job options (figure 1). There is a large disparity between these statistics compared to that of the general population of Maryland students, therefore awareness must be brought to this issue. Despite the available resources in Maryland for foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth, insufficient communication between these programs and the youth themselves continue to be an issue year after year.
Current Efforts

Currently, there are several initiatives in Maryland to help students in foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth. These programs are designed to help students K-12 and after high school graduation. First, there is the *Maryland Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients* through the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), which provides the opportunity for tuition to be waived at public colleges in Maryland. In order to receive the waiver, the foster student must fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and reach out to the financial aid office at their desired institution. To be eligible, the student must be 25 or younger, have been in a foster placement at the time of graduating high school or earning their GED, have been in a foster placement since the age of 13 for at least one year, or must be the younger sibling of someone who was in foster care upon graduation or for at least a year since the age of 13. In order to continue receiving the waiver, the student must stay in a Maryland public college and reapply for FAFSA each year. This waiver remains eligible for the student for 10 years or until they receive their Bachelor's degree---whichever comes first. This program also applies to unaccompanied homeless youth. To qualify for the waiver, they must be declared as an unaccompanied homeless youth who is not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian, as well as be considered homeless according to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Act defines homeless children as “individuals who lack fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” (MHEC). While this program provides many opportunities for students, it only covers the cost of tuition and application fees, not books, housing, meals, or if needed, transportation. According to College Board research, the average cost of textbooks for a public, four year, in-state College is $1,240 per year (Fig. 2). For a student who is coming from a foster care or homeless background, an added expense of over a thousand dollars a year can be the difference between success and failure. With the added cost of
transportation ($11,140 per year) and room and board ($2,120 per year) (Fig. 2), even students with a waiver may find it impossible to attend college and work enough to cover the added expenses.

A second Maryland initiative for foster care students is the *Maryland Education and Training Voucher Program* (ETV). This program is federally funded through the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and administered by the state. In this program, former foster care students are able to receive up to $5,000 a year for qualified school-related expenses. To be eligible for this voucher, the student must have either been in foster care on their 18th birthday when they aged out of the system, was adopted after their 16th birthday, will have their foster case closed between the ages of 18-21, or was placed in kinship guardian care after their 16th birthday. The student must be between the ages of 18-21 to apply, and may receive funds for up to five years. Additionally, their personal assets must be worth less than $10,000 total. The student must have already been accepted into a degree or certificate program at a college, university, technical, or vocational school and in order to remain eligible for the voucher, the student must be able to show progress towards the degree or certificate. Unfortunately, this voucher is not available for unaccompanied homeless youth, so it leaves out an important population of underserved youth in Maryland. As the cost of college continues to rise, fewer and fewer students that are homeless or in foster care will be able to afford an education with the state aid that is currently provided.
Third, under the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), school stability for foster care students is addressed. On average, 70% of students in these populations experience an unscheduled school change throughout the school year compared to 40% of non-foster care or unaccompanied homeless students. When a student makes a sudden school change, their records can become lost or take an extended period of time to reach the next school. Under ESSA, the student is allowed to start at the new school without complete records, even if they require services such as special education or English language learning programs. Additionally, “these provisions [under ESSA] emphasize the importance of limiting educational disruption by keeping children who move in foster care [...] in their schools of origin, unless it is determined to be in their best interest to change schools” (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). Included in these efforts is guaranteed transportation to the school of origin, immediate enrollment if it is determined that it is in the child’s best interest to transfer, and a prompt best interest determination. While this program helps to mitigate some of the stress and disruption as a child enters or is moved in foster care, it lacks the whole child approach\(^3\) that programs for these populations need. This program also does not impact unaccompanied homeless youth, which is a population that could strongly benefit from school stability.

Lastly, during the 2019 legislative session, House Bill 911 was introduced, which seeks to create reliable housing programs for unaccompanied homeless youth and find solutions to their housing challenge. The bill established a workforce to study shelter and supportive services for unaccompanied homeless minors, and their findings are due December 1, 2019. Currently, the workgroup has identified several barriers that they are looking to resolve throughout the

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\(^3\) The whole child approach is defined as “ [...] policies, practices, and relationships that ensure each child, in each school, in each community, is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.” (ASCD).
process. The three biggest barriers found were: difficulty finding secure housing for youth about
to turn eighteen, the question of which Maryland state agency will take the lead in the project,
and determining what state funding could be developed for the project. This workgroup has high
expectations and a passionate desire to find real qualitative solutions to the homeless minors’
crisis in Maryland. While this initiative is specifically for unaccompanied homeless minors and
does not include foster care youth, it creates an excellent opportunity for consistency and safety
in unaccompanied homeless minors lives.

Policy Alternatives

*Policy Alternative I: Pilot three transitional liaison positions in Maryland counties to help
navigate students through the process of transitioning to higher education or a job path.*

McKinney-Vento regulations require that every school system in the state have a
homeless education coordinator who is responsible for a number of services to eliminate barriers
for homeless youth in Maryland public schools (National Center for Homeless Education, 2012).
The Maryland Every Student Succeeds State Plan says that Maryland Local Education Areas
(LEAs) and schools “must be intentional about providing information, reports, and data in a
format and language parents understand, as well as ensuring opportunities for the involvement of
parents [...] of foster care children” (Maryland State Department of Education, 2018, pg 76).
There are measures in place to support these students in Maryland public schools that give them
access to resources in housing, transportation, and counseling. However, there is no individual
charged with educating foster care and unaccompanied homeless students about what happens
after graduation, and what opportunities exist specifically for them.

This policy would create a pilot program with three transitional liaisons across the state to
support and educate foster care and unaccompanied homeless students on opportunities they
have after graduation. The position could be overseen collaboratively by the Maryland State
Department of Education (MSDE), the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), Maryland Department of Social Services (MDSS), and the Maryland Department of Labor (Labor). The liaison will work to connect public school homeless and foster care youth, with higher education financial aid/student services and potential employers. The liaisons would serve in Western, Central, and Eastern Maryland counties, and depending on the success, eventually expand to more school systems. A potential location to house this position is in the county Boards of Education, however the liaison would be traveling often to meet with students and various stakeholders. Roles of this liaison are to:

- Connect with community colleges, four year institutions, businesses, and American Job Centers to understand how foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth can gain access to employment and higher education opportunities following their graduation.
- Be a resource for this foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth by working with them through their post-graduate search, informing them on the options they have, and assisting with their transition.
- Be an expert on the current initiatives and opportunities that this population can take advantage of to pursue higher education or a career (ie. tuition waivers)
- Understand population barriers and work with schools and employers to find ways to remove these barriers so that they do not inhibit higher education and job opportunities.

There is a lack of knowledge around resources that already exist for this population of students when it comes to post-graduation opportunities. This liaison will bridge the gap and provide access to higher education or employment for these students with a goal to ensure stable future careers so these students can support themselves, breaking the cycle of homelessness.

When laying out promising practices in serving homeless youth for institutions of higher education, The National Center for Homeless Education suggests significant collaboration
between higher education institutions and homelessness liaisons (National Center for Homeless Education, 2012). Best practices of using liaisons to connect vulnerable populations with opportunity are happening in a number of other states across the country. In 2016, legislation in California passed requiring each post-secondary education institution to have a homeless and foster care liaison, “responsible for informing students about financial aid and other assistance available to them” (SchoolHouse Connection, 2018). Louisiana passed legislation to create a similar liaison in all public post-secondary institutions (SchoolHouse Connection, 2018). On the Workforce side, Pennsylvania is using transition specialists to work with adult education english language learners to assist these individuals in their transition from adult education to workforce training opportunities (California WorkForce Development Board, 2017, pg.10). Options in both higher education and workforce training are critical for these youth which is why the transitional liaison would serve both paths. All youth have different needs, so this position works to meet students where they are.

Policy Alternative II:
Develop a pilot program, beginning in three public universities, that establishes year-long housing for students that receives either the Maryland waiver or ETV.

For youth that are homeless or in the foster care system they face many additional obstacles to attaining an education that most youth in Maryland do not have to encounter. These difficulties can be: spotty educational backgrounds and records, transportation difficulties, feeling “out of place”, and housing. “Homeless youth transitioning to postsecondary environments often struggle to meet basic needs, including securing stable housing. Students [...] divert attention away from educational and social development to ensure they have food and shelter” (Homelessness: How Residential Instability Complicates Students Lives, 2010, pg 12). Therefore, this proposed program would aim at eliminating the housing problem so that students are able to focus on earning their degree.
The Maryland Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients and Maryland Tuition Waiver for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth address the challenge of paying for the actual tuition necessary to attend college, but they do not cover housing. ETV does provide an additional $5,000 dollars to students who qualify on a first come first serve basis (Foster Care to Success). However, with other expenses such as books/supplies and fees, most, if not all of this will end up going straight to those expenses leaving little to nothing left for housing.

Through the proposed program, a group of 25 students with aspirations to attend college who are homeless or have been in foster care in Maryland would receive year-round housing on three campuses of Maryland public universities: Frostburg State University, Salisbury University, and University of Maryland College Park. The universities have been deliberately chosen so that this program is available to all Marylanders, regardless of where they live in the state (Fig. 3).

As part of the program, the students would work part time on campus during the summer. This would then allow them to make extra money for things such as food, clothes, and other expenses. They would also be enrolled in one or two classes over the summer since as aforementioned, some of these students might have holes in their educational backgrounds and this would allow them the time to catch up and still graduate on time. The summer section of the program serves a dual role. Since homelessness and being in foster care can be stigmatizing, extra care is given to this consideration. Their classmates and friends might wonder why these students are staying at school year round, and instead of the students having to divulge the often stigmatizing reality that they are homeless or in foster care, they can say they are working part time and taking a summer class. This provides a perfect true rationale for why they are at school.
if they choose not to tell their personal situation to certain individuals. This solution, although not its primary objective, would also secondarily tackle other issues such as lack of a sense of community and financial struggles for these populations through its possible implementation.

Policy Alternative III: Establish a state-wide mandated plan that ensures that foster care and unaccompanied youth have access to specialized counselors who can help them in their transition process in and following high school.

This state-wide mandated plan will include but is not limited to:

- A P³ project initiative that includes informational posters, pamphlets, and presentations filled with resources (from local/state/federal levels) available to foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth that will operate through guidance counseling offices. Local government councils and state department agencies will have to formulate resource reports available to foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth within their counties and their department and send to high school guidance counseling offices. In addition, designated location spots/boards can be allocated as the “foster care and unaccompanied youth wall,” which will display the resources available for any youth who fall under the criteria.

- A bi-annual state training that prepares guidance counselors to be specialized in catering to the needs of foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth. These counselors will be available to the foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth in schools.

- A communication system between guidance counselors assigned to foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth students, and their team of personnel. This system will combat the communication issues between different liaisons and personnel assigned to foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth that prevent the youth’s educational
needs from adequately being met. This system can be created on a case-by-case basis, and either be online or face-to-face through quarterly meetings.

One underlying reason why there are barriers affecting foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth is due to the fact that they are less likely to identify as homeless or as a foster care youth with needs. Thus, they are unable or fear accessing services because of their situational stigma. It is challenging to identify and accurately assess the number, characteristics, and needs of these youth. However, with a specialized point person supporting these youth, they will be able to connect to the resources available to them in Maryland such as the Ready by 21 program\(^4\), the 504 plan\(^5\), Maryland Tuition Waivers for Foster Care and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, and the Maryland ETV.

**Analysis and Recommendations**

*Analysis of Policy Alternative I:*

The estimated salaries of the three transitional liaisons would be $41,000-$45,000 per liaison which is based on the salary of a College/Career Readiness Specialist (Glassdoor 2014). Relevant state agencies such as MSDE, MHEC, Department of Labor, and or MDSS will collaborate to start, sustain, and ultimately grow this position in the long term. The more individuals in higher education and in the workforce, the more money will ultimately be generated into the economy. This policy would be effective because it provides three individuals who are experts in higher education and job opportunities for this population, it considers the needs of all identified students, ensures that students are met where they are, and that they receive the necessary assistance to succeed in the long term. This policy is politically feasible.

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\(^4\) The Ready by 21 Program is a Department of Human Services program that prepares foster care youth as they transition from the system.

\(^5\) 504 Plans are plans developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives accommodations that will ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment.
because Governor Hogan has made it clear that serving this population is a priority for his administration by signing legislation during his term such as the Fostering Employment Act and the Ending Youth Homelessness Act. This policy has the potential for a wide reach because if it expands, then all counties in Maryland will be served by a liaison, however, since liaisons will be spread across an entire county, they may have trouble balancing all the student needs.

*Analysis of Policy Alternative II:*

The average cost of a double dorm room per academic year is $6,654 at the three Maryland public universities listed (per the cost of housing on each school's websites). If one factors in the extra $1,663 which is 25% of that average total. This would account for the remaining 3 months or about a quarter of a year that students would be housed during the summer. This is a total of $8,317 per student for the entire year. If the $8,317 is multiplied by 25, for the 25 students in the program this comes out to a cost of $207,937 per year to the state of Maryland. Finally, the total cost for all students in the program to be housed for four years, the time in which they will complete their degree, is $831,748. While this is a substantial amount of money to fund a state program in some ways; in others it is not. The state regularly invests in multi-million dollar projects on various initiatives. This effort in its first four pilot years would help change the entire life trajectory for 25 young Marylanders by providing them the opportunity to earn their college degree for less than $1,000,000 total. A downside of the program is it would only be able to help 25 young people. However, if it goes well in its beginning years, the program can be expanded to admit more students.

*Analysis of Policy Alternative III*

This policy recommendation is cost effective because it is utilizing school system materials to put together resource guides and provide specialized training to individuals already within the school system. Therefore, this alternative only requires the expense of the bi-annual
training that the counselor will receive, which on estimate may cost between $2,000-$3,000 per counselor (American School Counselor Association\(^6\)). This policy initiates a “do more with less” mandate within counties which will be a benefit to state budgeting, however this may be a challenge for school systems to pull extra resources together without extra funding. In addition, designated location areas in schools allocated as the “foster care and unaccompanied youth wall,” may highlight the stigma carried with being in foster care or being an unaccompanied homeless youth. However, awareness surrounding their situation will be presented and target the goal of connecting these resources to these youth. With the established communication system, the team of workers will monitor the information being shared for their designated student in terms of how well they are doing in school or their necessary needs at home that may be affecting their school work.

To determine the best policy solution, we developed criteria to assess the success of the three recommendations proposed above. The criteria examined for each recommendation are: cost, efficiency, effectiveness, political feasibility, and reach. The criteria are given point values from one to three, one being the best option and three being the least desirable. The recommendation with the fewest amount of points will be considered the best option.

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\(^6\) According to the American School Counselor Association, full-day training for counselors who are working with at-risk students or trying to increase the achievement of students cost about $3,000 when calculating all possible expenses such as: travel arrangements, the training course, additional expenses, etc. See second citation for more information.
Based on the ratings, we suggest the policy option of the P³ plan because it is the most cost effective, has a wide reach, and will garner support.

**Implementation Issues**

There are various issues with implementing each of the policies proposed in the paper. For policy number one, finding and training professionals that would be able to perform the liaison role well and sustaining the salary amount of the position may be difficult. For the second policy, the main issue would be generating the approximately $200,000 per year to send the 25 students to the universities. One would also need the universities to agree to the program, and have the dorm space to accommodate five to fifteen students over the summer. For the final policy recommendation, a possible implementation issue is finding specific guidance counselors in the school system who would be good at this particular role, and would want to take it on in addition to their current workload. The cost of training these individual counselors based on their population of these youth in their counties may also be a challenge for the school system. Using a monetary bonus as an incentive may need to be utilized depending on the number of foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth that they are assigned.

**Conclusion**

Of the 4,000 foster care youth and 17,000 plus homeless youth (2,330 unaccompanied) in Maryland, few are able to graduate from high school, attend and graduate from college, or have the adequate resources to enter into the workforce. If they are provided with expanded opportunities, this population will be able to reach these goals and be included in experiences they are usually left out of such as college, scholarships, and safe housing. Three policy
solutions, including year-long housing for college students, developing liaisons for students transitioning into post high-school life, and increasing awareness for those in this population about opportunities available to them makes a difficult transition time for these youth who generally have little to no support easier. There are current efforts in place now to help these underserved populations that provide financial resources for higher education and job training, but with the added policy solutions outlined above, the whole child approach will be used and thousands of youth in need will be able to benefit from these new programs, which ultimately makes Maryland better for all.
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