



In early 2010, The Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board (YAB) spearheaded a campaign to advocate that Pennsylvania accept federal options available for states under the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act. Specifically, youth recommended that the Department of Public Welfare and Pennsylvania make it easier for youth to stay in care after age 18 and up until age 21.

The YAB, in cooperation with statewide partner Juvenile Law Center, drafted a letter to Secretary Dichter of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare advocating that Pennsylvania take the new options available under Fostering Connections. The letter was connected to a petition drive in which **YAB members throughout the state of Pennsylvania solicited over 750 signatures and a few personal letters from people in 20 counties.**

The exact total of signatures from supporters is listed below:

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| • Youth/students | 497 |
| • Caseworkers | 28 |
| • IL Coordinators/Counselors | 16 |
| • Other titles (Parents, Workers, Teachers) | 231 |
| • Judges/CASA/court personnel | 8 |

Secretary Dichter responded to the letter and petition signatures and agreed that the options available under Fostering Connections would benefit older youth in Pennsylvania’s child welfare system. However, due to the potential costs associated with taking these options, the Secretary is unable to take any action now. The Secretary has made a recommendation to the next Administration in Pennsylvania to reconsider the option when the economic situation improves. **Click [here](#) to read Secretary Dichter’s letter.**

The YAB will continue to advocate for changes to the child welfare system so youth “aging out” in Pennsylvania can be safe, successful, and happy.