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**Gov. Corbett's 'Fostering Connections' Proposal Can Benefit  
Pennsylvania's Foster Youth and Taxpayers**

*Fiscal Study by Juvenile Law Center, PA Partnerships for Children Supports  
Governor's Savings Estimates*

**(HARRISBURG, PA) Feb. 14, 2012** – Pennsylvania can provide stronger support to older foster youth, encourage adoption and save money by implementing common-sense changes to its foster care policies, according to a new report issued by Juvenile Law Center and Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children.

Significant benefits will be realized by acting on Governor Tom Corbett's budget proposal to fully implement the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, which provides states with incentives to improve outcomes for foster youth and promote adoption and legal guardianship.

"We know we can do more to help older foster youth make the challenging transition to adulthood and encourage foster families to adopt older youth," said Juvenile Law Center Executive Director Robert Schwartz. "By fully implementing Fostering Connections, we can do both – all while reducing costs."

Under existing state rules, foster parents can receive financial support until a foster youth in their care turns 21 if the youth meets certain educational and/or treatment criteria. Yet similar financial assistance ends at age 18 for families who choose to adopt or act as legal guardians to a foster youth.

"This disparity actually discourages families from adoption or legal guardianship by financially punishing them if they make an older foster child a permanent part of the family," Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children President and CEO Joan Benso explained. "Some foster parents would love to adopt children in their care, but they simply cannot afford it because of this financial disincentive. Thankfully, we have an opportunity to fix this problem."

The changes proposed by Governor Corbett would extend adoption and guardianship subsidies to age 21, the same age limit that exists for foster care support, thereby encouraging permanent placements and improving educational and long-term outcomes.

The governor's proposal also would allow more youth between ages 18 and 21 to benefit from the support of a foster family in cases where adoption or legal guardianship might not be an option.

Currently, Pennsylvania only extends foster care to age 21 for youth under certain circumstances, such as when a foster youth is working toward a high school diploma, enrolled in post-secondary education or receiving medical treatment. The governor's proposal would expand the criteria, allowing foster care to continue to age 21 for youth who are enrolled in job training or working at least 80 hours a month.

Expanding foster care eligibility in this way can provide critical support to older youth as they make the often difficult transition to adulthood. "Whether foster youth go on to college, job training or directly into the workforce, having the continued support of a family can help them navigate the challenges all young people face as they become independent adults," Schwartz said.

Governor Corbett's proposed budget for fiscal 2012-13 estimates Pennsylvania can save \$4.5 million in the coming fiscal year by implementing Fostering Connections. In addition to these savings, the implementation will enable the commonwealth to gain millions of dollars in federal support next fiscal year.

More information on the benefits of Fostering Connections can be found on PPC's Porch Light Project website at [www.porchlightproject.org/FC2012](http://www.porchlightproject.org/FC2012) or [www.jlc.org](http://www.jlc.org).

**CONTACT:**

Michael Race, Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, 717-236-5680

Marie Yeager, Juvenile Law Center, 717-699-2206

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