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New Law Would Nudge Foster Kids Toward College

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IPR program(s): [IPR News Features \(/program/ipr-news-features\)](#)**Date:** November 22, 2011*By Rick Pluta (mailto:rickp@mprn.org)*

Several hundred children a year "age out" of Michigan's foster care system when they reach the age of 18. That also means they lose their housing subsidy and medical coverage. Governor Rick Snyder is to sign a law Tuesday that would extend those benefits for foster children who enroll in college.

Jack Kresnak, who directs the advocacy group Michigan's children, says higher education is a particular hardship for young adults who grew up in foster care.

"I think that we owe it to them," he says. "We have taken them away from what we consider to be dangerous situations with their families and put them up and taken care of them until age 18. Do we just kick them out and slam the door in their face? Or is there a way for them to transition into adulthood and help them succeed?"

Kresnak says many former foster kids who enroll in college still don't make it all the way through to graduation. He says Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo has a residential support program that should be duplicated by other colleges.

Kresnak also says he would like to see the law amended in the future to allow a former foster kids who opt out of going to college a chance to change their minds and re-enter the system.

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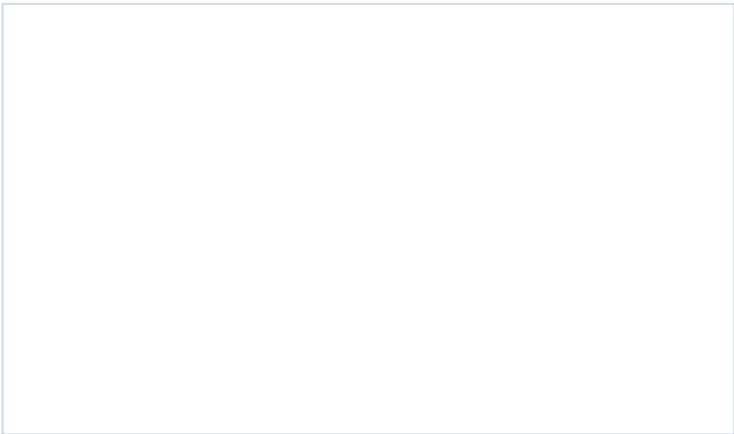
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