



**Commonwealth of Kentucky
Cabinet for Health and Family Services**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**REVISED: Governor Bevin ceremonially signs HB 158,
creating Foster Child Bill of Rights**

FRANKFORT, Ky. (June 5, 2019) - Governor Matt Bevin ceremonially signed House Bill 158 into law this week at the Kentucky State Capitol. The new law, in part, codifies a foster child bill of rights.

"We felt it was time to elevate these rights and codify them in state statute through an act of the Kentucky General Assembly so that these youth will have one statute to go to, so they know what their rights are each and every day," said Eric Clark, Commissioner of the Department for Community Based Services.

The law, in part, lays out 16 specific rights for children in care, including adequate food, clothing, and shelter. As well as a safe, secure, and stable family.

"For far too long, child welfare agencies have been reactive," said Clark. "It takes something bad happening for our agencies to become involved. Now, we are going to put our resources at the front end of the continuum to identify risks and safety concerns earlier."

Clark expressed appreciation for the foster youth who stepped up and shared their stories with legislators in Frankfort.

“On behalf of every child who is, or has been in foster care, you have our gratitude,” said Cameron Galloway, a former foster youth and student at Kentucky State University.

Galloway said the legislation will accelerate growth and provide new opportunities for foster youth, while assisting them in connecting to schools and families. “And for me personally, the right to be able to be involved in my case plan, the right to be able to go to court, and a have a say for what is being done for my placement as a child in foster care (was beneficial),” Galloway said.

During the ceremonial bill signing, Galloway spoke about his experience in the system and the guidance provided to him by his foster dad when he was older. Galloway is now pursuing a career in social work.

“I’m so grateful to (Cameron) for taking what your life experience has been, and turning right around and wanting to pour back in again,” Governor Bevin said at the bill signing.

“It is our duty as voices of the Commonwealth, youth advocates and all that work in child welfare to ensure these rights are known to those in foster care, and to encourage support of them in their journey throughout life,” Galloway said.

House Bill 158 also removes some barriers for potential adoptive families. Other provisions include background checks on child residential home staff as required under federal law and clarifying rules for the putative father registry.

“We have moved mountains to begin implementing the kind of reform that will change lives,” said Rep. David Meade, who sponsored the bill.

Kentucky is also working to implement the Family First Prevention Services Act, which changes how child welfare agencies respond to critical incidents.

The Commonwealth has set a goal to align state statutes with the federal law by October 1, 2019.

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/dEgEWfIRadw>

Additional information is available at <http://chfs.ky.gov/>.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.