

For Immediate Release

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CONTACT:  
Charlie Shaddox  
Partnership for Strong Communities  
charlie@pschousing.org  
203-435-2149



### **Connecticut One Step Closer to Passing Crucial ID Bill for Youth Experiencing Homelessness**

Housing advocates are celebrating the passage of H.B. 6666, part of the Public Health omnibus bill, due to a change to a little-known but crucial provision that affects youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.

The bill would allow youth experiencing homelessness, with the assistance of their school or a service provider, to obtain a copy of their birth certificate and/or a state ID for free. H.B. 6666 passed the Connecticut House of Representatives last Wednesday by a vote of 117-24.

“This bill is a vital step toward ensuring access to housing for our youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability,” said Kiley Gosselin, Executive Director of the Partnership for Strong Communities. “We hope to see the Senate show their continued support for youth experiencing homelessness by passing H.B. 6666 in the coming days.”

Many unaccompanied minors and young adults who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless do not have access to identity documents, which can be a significant barrier to accessing housing. Last year, an estimated 7,800 youth and young adults experienced homelessness and housing stability in Connecticut, according to the 2020 Youth Outreach and Count Report, out of which 720 identified access to ID card and birth certificate among their top services need.

Identity documents are also often required as a precondition for employment. Approximately 58% of homeless and housing-unstable youth and young adults reported being unemployed in 2020.

Currently, Connecticut state law only allows individuals who are residents of a homeless shelter or facility for homeless persons to receive a fee waiver for a state ID. There is currently no fee waiver for a person to get a birth certificate.

By passing H.B. 6666, Connecticut would join other states including Florida, Texas, and California in providing fee waivers for youth experiencing homelessness.

Connecticut-based advocacy groups and youth leaders with lived experience have consistently called attention to the need for access to identity documents over the past few years. The Youth Action Hub and the Center for Children’s Advocacy have led the advocacy movement through the Reaching Home Campaign. The Reaching Home Campaign, a coalition of over 200 partners dedicated to ending

homelessness in Connecticut, set the identity document provision as one of its top legislative priorities for the 2021 session.

“Young people told us what they need to move out of homelessness. We advocated for their needs, the state agencies responded positively, the House passed the bill and, now, we are hopeful the Senate will vote favorably to bring it to the finish line,” said Stacey Violante Cote, Director of Operations for the Center for Children’s Advocacy.” Passing this bill will allow young people experiencing homelessness to get what they need- access to housing, employment and support services.”