



# DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegheny County  
Department of Human Services



July 2020

## **Former foster youth speaks at HUD event**

July 24 marked the first anniversary of Foster Youth to Independence (FYI), an initiative designed to prevent or end homelessness among young adults who are in, or have recently left, the foster care system and have nowhere to go. The occasion was commemorated with a roundtable that featured U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Ben Carson; U.S. Senator Pat Toomey; local leaders; and Leibrynn, a college student who is using the voucher to bridge the gap while she finishes school.

Leibrynn attended the event to represent FYI recipients and foster care alumni. During the roundtable, she spoke about the importance of supporting youth transitioning out of foster care, and she advocated for expanding options for Section 8 housing by establishing partnerships with landlords and making efforts to reduce stigma.

Reflecting on the experience, Leibrynn said, "Meeting Ben Carson and being able to thank him for implementing a program to prevent young adults from becoming homeless was a huge honor. I am so grateful that I will be receiving a voucher. This program is a steppingstone for young adults to gain the basic necessities needed to live a prosperous life. Many organizations, such as Action Housing and HUD, have helped young adults like me aging out of foster care. I realize that I do not need to be afraid of the world and I can live a normal life like anyone else."

Courtney Lewis, transition age youth system coordinator in the Office of Community Services (OCS), added, "Leibrynn is a dynamic advocate, public speaker and critical thinker. Her comments and presence made clear how young adults transitioning from foster care are an incredible asset to our community and are on the forefront of creating our future."

In Allegheny County, the FYI program is a partnership between DHS, the Allegheny County Housing Authority, Action Housing, and the 412 Youth Zone.