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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
**MARTIN J. WALSH**

September 10, 2019

Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz  
Chair, Joint Committee on Children,  
Families and Persons with Disabilities  
State House, Room 111  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Kay Khan  
Chair, Joint Committee on Children,  
Families and Persons with Disabilities  
State House, Room 146  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairwoman Chang-Diaz, Chairwoman Khan, and Members of the Committee:

Today, I write in strong support of H.144, *An Act ensuring positive transition for at-risk youth*, filed by Representative Liz Malia, which requires state-funded service providers to provide a comprehensive transition plan that helps these youth navigate housing and employment resources as well as social and emotional support systems.

Housing, employment, healthcare, these are all pillars of a successful transition out of a foster home, a residential recovery program, or a corrections facilities. Unsurprisingly, an effective, structured and well-thought-out transition plan can make all the difference for a young person transitioning out of these programs, in the absence of support from family, friends, and community. The difference, in this case, is the difference between stable housing and homelessness. It's the difference between recovery and relapse. It's the difference between a gateway to job opportunities and unemployment.

In their ideal form these plans are created long before an individual is discharged, giving the young person and provider the time necessary to find the appropriate employment, healthcare, and housing accommodations. Evidence suggests a strong link between housing instability and recidivism and relapse. Nevertheless, many young people are referred to shelters as an "appropriate housing option" upon discharge from a service provider, including State-run providers. Shelters are not equipped to address the unique needs of young people coming from mental health, public health, corrections, and social services systems. In Boston alone, more than 300 young people live on our streets or stay in our shelter system every night, and over 1,100 engage with our shelter system every year. An estimated 32% of these young people report justice system involvement, approximately 33% report a foster care placement and 22% report experiences with both.

This bill would not only prevent all state run social services agencies from discharging young people without a transition plan, but it would also prevent these providers from discharging young people straight to shelters. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, the bill instructs agencies that already engage in this practice to focus on quality improvement and to

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formalize their current practices. By implementing a more intentional focus on transition planning, we will have a positive impact on the lives of our most vulnerable young people.

I respectfully request your support of this bill and thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly or you may Alyssa Ring in the Office of Intergovernmental Relations at (617) 635-3817.

Sincerely,



Martin J. Walsh  
Mayor of Boston