



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION
OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Building Futures
Through Education

March 13, 2015

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Leahy,

The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEH CY) is a national membership association dedicated to educational excellence for children and youth experiencing homelessness. Our members work in public schools, state departments of education, and community organizations to support the identification, enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children and youth, from early childhood through post-secondary education.

We witness the predation and harm, including trafficking, that befall children and youth who lack stable housing. Public schools are often the only safety net for these youth, particularly in communities without safe and appropriate shelter. Our members try to connect homeless students to supports, including housing, to prevent them from falling victim to trafficking, so that they may continue their schooling and look forward to brighter futures as educated adults. However, our efforts are often stymied by a severe lack of services for youth, which are caused and/or exacerbated by restrictions and policies imposed by the U.S. Housing of Urban Development, and by the lack of available programs and beds through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs.

For these reasons, we urge you to find a path forward for the consideration of S. 178, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015. We support the bipartisan provisions of this legislation, and we are eager for them to be considered, voted upon, and enacted. We urge you to reject any partisanship that would stand in the way of final passage.

We are also very supportive of two bipartisan amendments. S.A. 271 would amend HUD's homeless definition to be inclusive of youth who are put in harm's way due to lack of housing, and who are verified as homeless youth by public schools and other federal programs. It would return decision-making to local communities, allowing local service providers to prioritize funding for based on the needs in their community. S.A. 290 would reauthorize the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program, which provides essential services for homeless youth, and make it an even more effective program to prevent trafficking of homeless youth.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of all of America's children and youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara Duffield".

Barbara Duffield
Director of Policy and Programs