

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency



Text Amendment Petition ZC Case No.: 24-19
Public Hearing

Testimony of
Tanya Torres Trice
Interim Director

Before the
Zoning Commission

May 1, 2025 @ 4:00 pm

Good afternoon, Commissioners. I am Tanya Torres Trice, Interim Director of the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CDSA). Joining me is Desiree Minor, our Facility Licensing and Relicensing Supervisor, who has spearheaded this proposed amendment.

First, we extend our sincere gratitude to the Zoning Commission for your unanimous emergency approval of this vital text amendment, allowing CDSA to continue serving our older foster youth without interruption.

CDSA requests an amendment to the definition of "youth residential care home" (Section 100.2 of Subtitle B of the Zoning Regulations) to explicitly include foster children under the age of 21 within the definition of "child."

Justification for the Text Amendment

CDSA is responsible for the care and placement of the District's foster children until they achieve permanency, leave care, or turn 21. We prioritize kinship and foster home placements, recognizing their crucial role in a child's well-being. Our comprehensive placement options also include specialized group homes tailored for various needs, such as therapeutic support, pregnant/parenting teens, and youth with developmental delays.

The need for this zoning amendment became apparent in 2023. Previously, the Department of Building (DOB) issued letters permitting CDSA to license group homes for foster youth up to age 21. However, in 2023, the DOB clarified that they could only issue these letters for facilities serving individuals under 18, citing the current zoning definition of "youth residential care

home." This discrepancy prevents CFSA from licensing essential group homes for foster youth over 18, despite the Youth Residential Facilities Licensure Act explicitly allowing licensure up to age 21. Without DOB zoning approval, we cannot license these homes.

Failure to amend the zoning definition will create a critical shortage of placements for older foster youth, a need that cannot be met through other housing options. CFSA currently contracts with eight group home providers, all of whose contracts are expiring this year. While emergency regulations provided a temporary solution, allowing us to continue these contracts, only one has been renewed, two extended until August 2025, and the remaining five will expire later this year.

Our group homes are currently operating at close to 100% capacity, underscoring their vital role in our placement array. Losing these homes would displace 49 vulnerable foster youth which would disrupt their sense of stability and overall well-being potentially leading to further emotional and behavioral challenges, academic difficulties, and a greater risk of negative outcomes.

In conclusion, this proposed text amendment is crucial to CFSA's ability to provide stable and supportive living arrangements for our older foster youth. By aligning the zoning definition of "child" with the Youth Residential Facilities Licensure Act to include those under 21 in CFSA's care, we can address the urgent need for appropriate placements and prevent significant disruption in the lives of these young people. This change reflects our unwavering commitment to the well-being and development of all foster children in the District.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We are now prepared to answer any questions you may have.