

May 16, 2018

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray:

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal budget and policy decisions, I am writing to express our support for the Affordable Housing for Educational Achievement Demonstration (AHEAD) Act (S.1949).

As an organization committed to securing the future of America's most vulnerable youth, we applaud you for your leadership in promoting community partnerships to foster the academic success of homeless youth.

In the United States, 1.3 million children are identified as homeless by the U.S. Department of Education. Addressing child, youth and family homelessness is a multi-faceted issue that connects housing insecurity with the food, health, and education sectors. For instance, children who are homeless are more likely to be food insecure which severely impacts their health—as seen through physical and mental developmental delays—and leads to poor academic performance in school along with problems later in life.

The AHEAD Act combats the staggering issue of child and youth homelessness by incentivizing housing authorities, school districts, and community partners to work together to address and prevent it. This policy seeks to keep students permanently housed, improve school attendance, and reduce learning loss.

Given the intersectionality of homelessness, housing authorities in the state of Washington have already started partnering with schools to address adverse childhood experience (ACEs) that arise when children and youth experience traumatic situations, such as homelessness and housing insecurity. This legislation would enable other states to engage in similar efforts through a national investment in partnerships between public housing authorities and trauma-informed programs that are vital to keeping low-income and house-insecure students on track academically.

We graciously thank you for your leadership on behalf of children and families, and we look forward to working with you to help advance this important legislative initiative.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley
President