



Bill Would Give Homeless Youth Access to Birth Certificates

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After three years of trying, human services advocates are hopeful that lawmakers will finally approve a bill that permits homeless youth to access their birth certificates.

House Bill 6482 was approved by the legislature's planning and development committee earlier this week. The measure received the endorsement of the public health committee last month.

The bill would allow "certified homeless" people between the ages of 15 and 18 to obtain a birth certificate so they can legally work and obtain health care, among other necessities.

It is "a no-cost solution to a very real problem in our communities," said Stacey Violante Cote, director of the Teen Legal Advocacy Project at the University of Connecticut School of Law's Center for Children's Advocacy.

Statistics from the state Department of Education indicates there are more than 250 homeless minors who are currently attending school. And that number does not include those under 18 who are homeless and not in school.

"Under current law in Connecticut, a minor can't obtain his [or] her birth certificate without the consent of a parent or guardian," Violante Cote explained via email.

"For youth who are homeless and don't have a parent or guardian to give consent, the law makes it impossible to get a copy of their own birth certificate, which in turn makes it almost impossible for homeless youth to get a job, get health care, mental health care, complete registration for school [or] get state-issued identification," she said.