



## **Kids Matter Index Rating on H336 Fostering Youth Transitions:**

### **YES, this bill is good for Idaho Children**

**Advancing Options to Extend Care:** This allows the state to better support successful transitions out of foster care and into adulthood by providing the option to extend care until they turn 21.

- Youth in foster care may choose to stay in care if they meet certain eligibility criteria, such as working or attending post-secondary education.
- The choice of whether to extend care is entirely up to the foster youth.
- Last year, 83 young people in Idaho were emancipated or aged out of foster care on their 18th birthday.
- Studies show youth in extended care received more independent living services, progressed further in their education, had more access to health and mental health services, and experienced less economic hardship and involvement in the criminal justice system than did those who left care at age 18.

**Congregate Care Placements:** Updates requirements for congregate care or group home placements and ensures that children who do not need this type of intense supervision are not kept in group settings.

- Today, Idaho has 14 in-state congregate care providers housing approximately 100 foster children and youth. These recommended updates come from congregate care providers, foster youth, the courts, and tribal representatives.
- If a child must be removed from home due to abuse or neglect, placement with relatives or foster parents are top priority. For some children and youth with emotional and behavioral disturbance, placement in congregate care is necessary and appropriate.
- The specific congregate care updates will (1) set a shortened timeline for the department and courts to communicate and act on the child's behalf; (2) prioritize the best interest of the child when determining such placement; (3) require the department more closely monitor the child when in a group home; and (4) require ongoing evaluation of potential alternative placements such as family reunification, placement with a relative or foster family, or adoption.
- Without these changes, the ability of the state and congregate care programs to seek federal reimbursement for foster care placements will end as of September 30, 2021.