

Item Title: Accept and Appropriate Federal Supplemental Chafee (LINKS) Funding from the NC Department of Health and Human Services for Health and Human Services Child Welfare

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners accepts and appropriates \$732,500 of Federal Supplemental Chafee (LINKS) funding from the NC DHHS in revenues and expenditures into the Grants and Donations Fund to provide one-time unrestricted payments to young adults who are or were in foster care at age 14 or older.

Item Summary:

Purpose: In accordance with the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, the Board of Commissioners must approve all amendments that increase the budget for a fund.

Background: The U.S. Congress appropriated additional funds for the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood. This program distributes funds to states to provide economic assistance to persons who are or were in foster care. The program is more commonly called "LINKS." LINKS is not an acronym; it is a word that captures the purpose of the Chafee Act to implement a robust, youth-guided program with a network of supports and outcome-based services for youth and communities. The primary goal is to promote connections between youth with family, friends, mentors, and the community in support of their attainment of employment, education, financial assistance, skills training, and other resources to facilitate a successful transition to adulthood. The LINKS program typically does not provide direct payment to youth. This funding allocation is specifically to address the needs of youth during the pandemic.

The intent of the additional assistance to assist young adults who are or were in foster care and may not have benefited from prior COVID relief efforts, including stimulus checks. The State of North Carolina has awarded Wake County a portion of this supplemental funding based on the population of children in foster care. All young adults who are at least 18 years old and are not yet 27 and were in foster care at age 14 or older are eligible. An assessment of financial need is not required. This Board action will appropriate the funds and County staff will begin distributing funds to individuals.

Board Goal: The Board action complements Community Health and Vitality Goal 3: Support a higher quality of life for vulnerable residents and communities.

Fiscal Impact: This agreement provides an additional \$732,500 in the Grants and Donations Fund, Health and Human Services Department to provide one-time unrestricted payments to eligible affected clients for Child Welfare youth. There is no matching funds requirement. The funding source is not COVID-specific, but instead supplemental Chafee Foster Care funds.

Additional Information:

The original LINKS funding provided was \$126,947. This funding is to provide one-time unrestricted payments to this population of vulnerable young adults expires September 30, 2021. Counties must create a financial obligation for each eligible young adult who will be receiving the one-time unrestricted payment. This does not require counties to cut a check by September 30, only to create the obligation.

To meet this requirement, the Health and Human Services Department has worked directly with Wake County Finance to create an encumbrance in the Child Welfare budget to ensure adequate funds are obligated by the proposed deadline. The HHS Department has sufficient budget capacity to commit the required amounts until additional funds are authorized and appropriated.

Eligibility requirements for the one-time unrestricted payment:

- All young adults who are at least 18 years old and are not yet 27 and were in foster care at age 14 or older
- All young adults with whom Counties were able to identify, locate and reach out to by September 30, 2021

The amounts of one-time unrestricted payments to eligible young adults which may be made under this program are as follows:

Age Category	Number of Eligible Young Adults	One-time Stipend	Total Amount
18 – 20 Years	87	2,500	\$217,500
21 – 26 Years	103	5,000	\$515,000
Total	190	-	\$732,500

Wake County Health and Human Services, Division of Child Welfare intends to allocate these funds as follows:

Budget Category	Amount
Provider Stipends	\$732,500

Attachments:

1. Dear County Directors Letter
2. Budget Memo – FY 2022 Grants and Donations Fund