



To whom it may concern:

AEOA serves young people, ages 14 up to age 23, who are currently or have been in out-of-home placement, and youth who are homeless and/or at-risk. Services are provided through several programs including Free at Last (FAL), Youthbuild, Living Independently from Experience (LIFE) Transitional Housing, as well as homeless youth outreach and case management. Our youth programming has developed a reputation of excellence for youth needing independent living skills and housing in Itasca and Koochiching Counties.

The common objective of our youth-serving programs is to help young people achieve the skills necessary to become successful adults. Our philosophy of service focuses on the strengths and potential of youth and overcoming their weaknesses, problems, or barriers. The youth that we serve typically do not have any supports put in place and are on their own. The needs of finding shelter, food, a job, completing their education, mental health services, etc. is daunting, and our ever-inflating economy makes it extremely difficult for our youth to succeed. Our youth need supporting individuals to navigate the system as well as the financial support to stay afloat while doing so.

If HF 1712 was passed and our programs were to receive more funding, it would be a tremendous opportunity to allow AEOA to expand our wrap around service programming. We would be able to help more youth and provide more long-term housing for youth. We would also like to add a mental health practitioner on our staff.

Sincerely,

T. Maras

Tawnya Maras
Youth Services Manager