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Karen Schimke
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Memorandum in Support

S.4388 (Montgomery)/A.8504 Scarborough

An Act to amend the family court act and the social services law, in relation to trial discharges of youth in foster care and voluntary re-placements of older adolescents in foster care.

The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy strongly supports this Office of Court Administration bill allowing older youth who have left foster care for independent living the option of returning to foster care under certain circumstances.

This bill provides a vital safety net for youth who exit foster care by providing extensions of trial discharge at permanency hearings six months at a time. Those who have already left foster care within the past 24 months can petition Family Court to return voluntarily to foster care. Certain conditions apply including:

- 1) the youth has no reasonable alternative to foster care;
- 2) the youth must be willing to attend an educational or vocational program if unemployed;
and
- 3) the youth must be between the ages of 18 and 21 or a former foster care youth under the age of 21.

Youth who exit or age out of foster care are more likely to find entry level, low-wage job opportunities and are particularly vulnerable to economic downturns, leaving them susceptible to homelessness. This bill provides them with a safety net by allowing them to come back into care if no other option exists, and providing them with ongoing assistance as they transition into adulthood. In addition, this bill recognizes the importance of increasing each youth's opportunities for success by requiring entry into an educational or vocational program as a condition of return.

Importantly, Title IV-E funds are available to support these youth under the recently enacted Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act.

For these reasons, SCAA supports this legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Karen Schimke'.

Karen Schimke
President/CEO

June 8, 2009