

ANNUAL REPORT JULY '20-JUNE '21




NATIONAL FOSTER YOUTH INSTITUTE



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*This report marks the transition of NFYI's annual reporting period from the calendar year to the fiscal year. Future reports will be issued in the Fall, at the close of the fiscal year.*





# A MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR, WENDY SMITH



The past year has been eventful and challenging for NFYI, as it has been for our country and for the world. The losses from the COVID pandemic have continued, and many have suffered. Through this time, our organization has continued to provide education and support around health issues as well as the matters that have driven our work since we began: empowerment of those affected by the child welfare system, reciprocal learning between our members and policy makers, and increased volume of foster youth voices as we seek to make change.

This year was the first of what we hope will be many for Rebecca Louve Yao to serve as our Executive Director. And she has been busy! During this difficult year, NFYI members and staff have not paused at all. We have supported voter registration and emergency relief to those affected by the devastating storm in Texas. We have hosted discussions with lawmakers centered on emergency support for foster youth during the pandemic, Native foster youth issues, juvenile justice reform, and homelessness among foster youth. NFYI has been hosting monthly virtual skill-building webinars for former foster youth, and we have expanded our virtual town hall series featuring members of Congress.

In 2020, COVID forced us to pivot to virtual means to bring our members together, and to engage with legislators and community partners. And this year, along with everyone else, we found that the 2021 surges of the pandemic required us to remain largely virtual. So, we adapted. We were unable to hold an in-person Shadow Day this year, but we facilitated workshops in preparation for our Virtual Congressional Convening in July 2021. Our hope, and our plan, is to return to the actual halls of Congress for Shadow Day, 2022.

We are never more powerful than when we are together. I am humbled—and at the same time, proud—to lead NFYI, with its inspiring youth members and staff, as we look forward to the year ahead. Our small but mighty Board of Directors joins me in our commitment to doing our part to lift up the voices of system-involved youth and families to make impact on policy at the local, state, and national levels, transforming the child welfare system into the child well-being system it should be.

*Wendy Smith Meyer*



## A MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, REBECCA LOUVE YAO

It is essential that we honor the hard work of our donors, members, and staff by taking a moment each year to look back and celebrate our victories in the face of adversity, perhaps never more so than in the destructive wake of this pandemic.

Even in the midst of one of the most volatile environments in our lifetimes, NFYI continues to push the work forward. In addition to celebrating almost a decade of transformational work, we expanded our programming to launch us into the next decade, grew our local and national membership, and continued building valuable relationships with community partners and decision makers at the local and national levels.

At the Regional Listening Sessions NFYI hosted across the country, current and former foster youth with vastly different backgrounds told stories of common struggles, the same issues coming up again and again. NFYI made these issues – juvenile justice, higher education access, healthcare access, child welfare prevention, and mentorship – the cornerstone of our work both on a national level and with local, community-specific interventions.

Homelessness is another challenge that continues to burden our youth. Lack of safe and affordable housing, lack of access to higher education opportunities, and difficulty obtaining steady employment with livable wages are just a few of the issues that lead to homelessness for former foster youth – an experience that 50% will have in their lifetime. This is why all of our NFYI Member Chapters have identified homelessness as a key issue for their focus.

While we accomplished so much, the ongoing pandemic continued to present challenges to our organization and our members. Our community's donations, participation in virtual town halls, op-eds, and education of Members of Congress helped secure federal funding for much of this year. That is why one of the most important things we'll do in the coming year will be continuing our calls for emergency pandemic aid for older and former foster youth.

We will not slow down and we will not be daunted. Each of the people behind NFYI's efforts are united in the belief that true change for child welfare will only happen when those with lived experience in the foster care system have a seat at the table and a voice that is heard across the country. This, and nothing less.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Rebecca Louve Yao". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

# LAST YEAR AT A GLANCE



## SUPPORTING FOSTER YOUTH & FAMILIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

NFYI spoke out on the emergency bipartisan bill introduced by Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL) and Rep. Jackie Walorski (R-IN) to provide emergency support for foster youth and child welfare services during the coronavirus pandemic. We educated the public on The Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act with a robust social media campaign and several virtual town halls.

## PROMOTING FOSTER YOUTH VOTER EDUCATION & TURNOUT

We encouraged former foster youth voter turnout and political engagement by simplifying voter registration, providing education around the election process, hosting a virtual safe space for processing the election results, facilitating a meeting between the Biden-Harris transition team and a coalition of former foster youth, and hosting a virtual Inauguration watch party.

## PROGRESS FOR POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS OF FOSTER & HOMELESS YOUTH

We began work to grow the NFYI DC Chapter, and co-hosted the L.A. Foster Power Summit, which was attended by over 50 local current and former foster youth. We also worked to educate members of Congress about the unique struggles foster youth and homeless youth experience. This education led to The Fostering Postsecondary Success for Foster and Homeless Youth Act of 2021, a bipartisan effort introduced by Congressmembers Don Bacon and Dan Kildee.

## CONTINUING TO MAKE AN IMPACT, VIRTUALLY

We hosted monthly virtual skill building webinars for former foster youth, expanded our virtual town hall series, held numerous virtual Congressional briefings (including a special briefing on juvenile justice reform), and began planning to adapt Shadow Day 2021 into a virtual Congressional convening between members of Congress and foster youth alumni.

## EMBRACING THE DIVERSITY OF FOSTER YOUTH

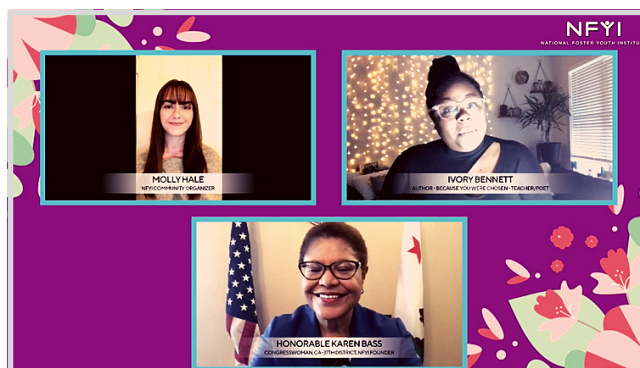
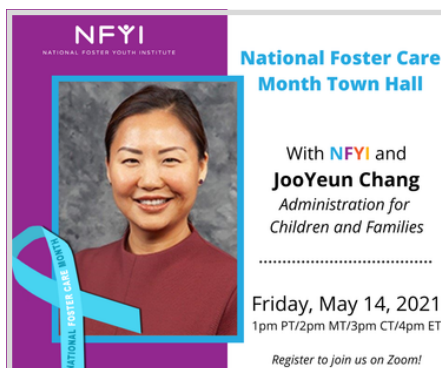
We hosted a virtual town hall discussion between Native foster youth alumni and Congresswoman Deb Haaland to highlight Native foster youth issues and marked Black History Month by hosting a special virtual event with the bestselling author of *The Black Foster Youth Handbook*, Ángela Quijada-Banks.

## CELEBRATING GROWTH OF NFYI MEMBERS

We congratulated Rebecca Louve Yao on her elevation to the position of Executive Director, and Wendy Smith on her elevation to Board Chair. We also welcomed two new NFYI staff members— Community Organizers Jose Canizal and Blade Oestreich.

## CELEBRATING & HONORING OUR NFYI TEAM & CHAMPIONS

In 2020, the NFYI team took our annual fundraiser virtual, streaming *An Afternoon of Learning & Celebration* in order to adapt and overcome the challenges of social distancing. The celebration was hosted by comedian Jenni Pulos and Theron Ogedengbe, featuring performances by NFYI members showcasing their talents in poetry, music, and dance. Jewels and Kiko Washington received the Champion for Children Award, NFYI's highest honor.





“Youth leaders should be able to have conversations with the people who have the power to make the system we lived with a better one for the sake of future foster youth.”

**Alexious Campbell**, Michigan

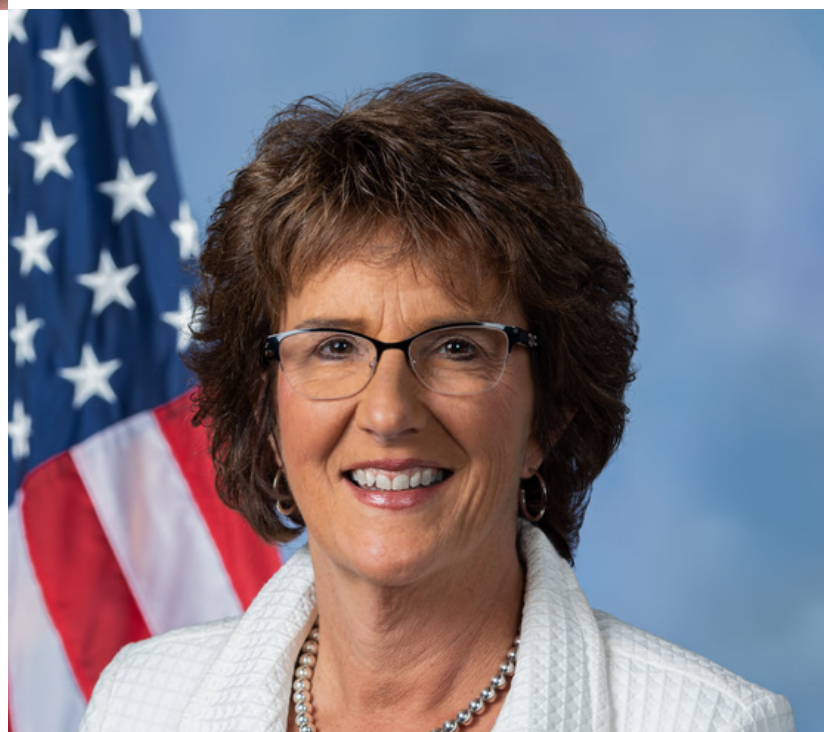


“The National Foster Youth Institute has been a force for so much good. We thank you for your leadership, your vision, your goodness.”

**Representative Nancy Pelosi**  
(CA-12) | Speaker of the House

“It was a privilege to work with NFYI to advance the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act, and I look forward to our continued work on commonsense bipartisan solutions to improve our child welfare system.”

**Representative Jackie Walorski**  
(IN-02) | Ranking Member of the Worker and Family Support Subcommittee



# 2020

**August 7th** - Town Hall with Congressman Kim Schrier

**August 13th** - Skill Building Webinar: National Organizers Workshop

**August 20th** - Town Hall with Congressmembers Danny Davis & Jackie Walorski

**October 1st** - NFYI Regional Listening Session (MI, NC, IN)

**October 2nd** - NFYI Regional Listening Session (TX, OK, CO, CT)

**October 2nd** - NFYI Regional Listening Session (WY, KS, LA, AK)

**October 3rd** - NFYI Presents: An Afternoon of Learning & Celebration

**October 28th** - Town Hall with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi

**February 4th** - Town Hall with Walorski & Davis

**February 22nd** - Congressional Briefing on Covid-19

**February 26th** - NFYI Celebrates Black History Month with Ángela Quijada-Banks, author of "The Black Foster Youth Handbook"

**April 29th** - Congressional Briefing on Juvenile Justice

**June 23rd** - NFYI Regional Townhall with Los Angeles County DCFS Director Bobby Cagle

**June 26th** - Foster Power Quarterly Convening

**June 30th** - Skill Building Webinar: Intro to Convening & Policy Focuses

**July 10th** - Town Hall with Congressman Gwen Moore

**July 24th** - Town Hall with Congressman Scanlon

**September 24th** - Town Hall with IFoster: Bridging the Digital Divide

**September 23rd** - Former Fosters Congressional Staff Town Hall

**September 26th** - Skill Building Webinar: Foster Youth Voting Workshop

**September 29th** - NFYI Regional Listening Session (FL, MD, VA)

**September 30th** - NFYI Regional Listening Session (CA)

**January 25th** - NFYI #LUNCHBAG Giving Social

**January 27th** - Skill Building Webinar: A Look at HR 7949

**March 10th** - Town Hall with Congressman Deb Haaland

**March 13th - 14th** - LA Foster Power Summit 2021

**March 22nd** - Town Hall with Congressmembers Kildee & Bacon

**May 11th** - White House Foster Youth Forum

**May 14th** - Town Hall with ACF Secretary JooYeun Chang

# 2021

# TIMELINE





# EVENTS BY THE NUMBERS

## FOSTER YOUTH SUPPORT & SKILL BUILDING

7

### **Mental Health & Wellness Sessions**

Events that teach foster youth & foster youth alumni skills for managing emotions, promoting mental health, and prioritizing self-care.

12

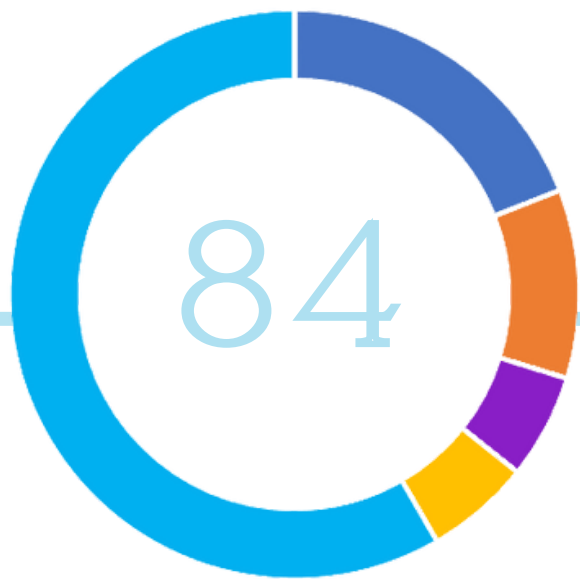
### **Professional Development Trainings & Workshops**

Events that teach foster youth & foster youth alumni both practical life skills (management of personal finances) and professional skills (resume building).

15

### **Peer to Peer Trainings, Talks & Community Events**

Events for foster youth & foster youth alumni by foster youth alumni. These events center the foster youth experience and help build a sense of community as foster youth alumni grow together.



# EVENTS BY THE NUMBERS

## FOSTER YOUTH ADVOCACY & COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

5

### Regional Listening Sessions

Events that spotlight foster youth voices, giving them a platform to share their experiences and policy recommendations with members of Congress.

5

### Coalition Convenings & Summits

Events where NFYI advocates organize current & former foster youth, their families, local organizations, and other stakeholders to form coalitions to mobilize for child welfare reform issues.

9

### Legislative Briefings

Events featuring expert speakers who translate the complexities of child welfare legislation into plain, accessible language.

16

### Bi-Weekly NFYI Chapter Meetings

Events where each NFYI regional chapter meets to set their local issue priorities, create engagement plans, and build community.

49

### Congressional Town Halls & Briefings

Events where NFYI advocates organize current & former foster youth, their families, local organizations, and other stakeholders to form coalitions to mobilize for child welfare reform issues.

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

# VIRTUAL CONVENING & REGIONAL LISTENING SESSIONS

Since 2012, NFYI has partnered with the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth to host foster youth and alumni of care (ages 18-30) in Washington, D.C., pairing them with their Congressmembers, whom they shadow for the day. This gives foster youth the opportunity to connect face-to-face with their representatives and get a behind-the-scenes look at the legislative process.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, conducting an in-person Shadow Day event was impossible for 2021, so NFYI did what we always do – we adapted to the circumstances, and began the ambitious project of planning the NFYI 2021 Virtual Congressional Convening that would take place in July 2021, FY2022.

The goal? Virtually connecting former foster youth across the nation with their representatives to highlight the impact Congressmembers can have on crucial issues for current and former foster youth and the impact foster youth can have on increasing understanding of the child welfare system.

To prepare, NFYI hosted six Regional Listening Sessions in the Fall of 2020. The sessions were attended by hundreds of former foster youth and their supporters, and the same issues came up again and again. These were the topics we knew we had to bring to the forefront in our national work, address with Congressmembers in our upcoming Virtual Congressional Convening, and prioritize as our key policy issues for the year.





## JUVENILE JUSTICE

There is a foster care to prison pipeline that demands our attention. Children who have been in foster care have a disproportionate risk of being incarcerated at some point in their young lives due to a variety of factors caused by an inequitable and flawed criminal justice system. Training on de-escalation and conflict management alternatives to police were desperately needed for foster parents and those working within the child welfare system.

## HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS

A college education is still just a dream for most foster youth, with only about 3% ever earning college degrees. For those who are able to enroll in higher education, living expenses, reliable housing, access to technology and high-speed internet, and help navigating the complexities of the academic world are all barriers to completing a degree.

## MENTORSHIP

Young people involved in the foster care system often have limited opportunities to connect with supportive adults. This is in part due to the fact that many youth in foster care are subjected to multiple, short-term placements, and are often separated from immediate and extended family systems.

## HEALTHCARE ACCESS

Many of the children and adolescents who enter foster care have complicated and serious medical, oral, and mental health issues. Psychological and emotional trauma rooted in early childhood experiences are particularly common and the lack of adequate access to health services serves to compound medical and mental health problems faced by youth in foster care.

## CHILD WELFARE PREVENTION

When it comes to finding a home for children and young people who have been separated from their parents, child welfare systems across the country are making progress in putting family first. The children and youth who remain longest in foster care, or whose last placement was in a group setting, are the least likely to ever become part of a permanent family. This lack of support leads to a greater likelihood of arrest, homelessness, unemployment, and early parenthood.

Our National Voices program develops platforms to lift up foster youth voices to be heard at both the local and federal levels. National Voices creates opportunities for alumni of foster care to tell their stories, share their ideas, and hone their leadership skills.

With our growing nationwide network of foster youth, alumni of foster care, and child welfare reform advocates, NFYI aims to have community leaders in every Congressional district across the US. These community leaders partner with policymakers at all levels of government to articulate pressing foster youth issues and explore possible solutions through policy change. NFYI's National Voices program trains the next generation of young organizers to transform the child welfare system.

"Foster Power is youth having a seat at their own table. I envision youth creating a better future for the next generation of foster youth and transforming the child welfare system."



**Alexis Obinna,**  
California

NFYI National Voices members receive training in community organizing, critical thinking, program analysis and design, policy, leadership, professional development, and communication. These trainings are vital for empowering foster youth partnerships with policy makers to create systemic change within the child welfare system. NFYI aims to be at the forefront of all child welfare policy reform and creation, with the goal of helping policy makers harness the expertise of foster youth as they develop new programs and policies.

Ensuring decision makers have access to and are hearing from constituents of child welfare is important in order for them to fully understand the impact the child welfare system has on children and families.

By creating internships that support NFYI's mission and help build professional skills, we're developing a new generation of foster care alumni who are better prepared for both the workforce and leadership roles in their communities. NFYI's paid internship program ensures that foster youth voices are the foundation of our work, provides hands-on grassroots organizing experience, and prepares program participants for future employment opportunities.

The internship program is based out of our Los Angeles office, where our youth leaders have organized "Speak Out" and open mic events to educate the community and lend their voices to critical issues, mobilized voters around ballot initiatives through phone banking and canvassing, and even helped pass Proposition HHH and Measure H, which focus vital resources on unhoused Angelenos.

"Being raised in the child welfare system was a very rough experience, always being looked down on and judged from home to home. It wasn't until I got involved with NFYI that I was able to see the value of my lived experience, and how it can sway important people such as members of congress or LA City council to be able to do more for my vulnerable community.

It's been a long journey since I got my approval email to be a 2019 delegate for NFYI, and because NFYI saw in me what others have looked past, I went from being mentored, to an organizing intern, to my current role as the organizing coordinator for NFYI. Thank you NFYI, I wouldn't be here without you."



**Jose Canizal, Los Angeles**

NFYI Staff | Former Intern



## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

## NFYI MEMBER CHAPTERS



NFYI local chapters are supported by our professional staff and led by current and former foster youth ages 18 to 30. Members participate in chapter retreats, attend local shadow days with state representatives, host briefings for local officials, and develop creative outreach events to engage and educate their peers.

Our local chapters focus on the unique issues that are specific to each individual community and build partnerships with local nonprofits, elected officials, and community leaders.



# LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

As NFYI's first and largest chapter, the **Los Angeles** chapter is creating the road map for transforming child welfare locally. The Los Angeles Chapter works at the grassroots level to engage youth impacted by foster care. Members are empowered to mobilize and organize Angelenos, partners, organizations, and decision makers to support local initiatives that will improve outcomes for youth in Los Angeles County.

Housing instability is a critical issue for many foster youth, particularly those who are aging out of care with no support system, and thus a focus for this chapter. Our other areas of focus include juvenile justice, access to higher education, and COVID-19 vaccine education.



"NFYI is a wonderful space for growth in leadership, advocacy, and learning. NFYI has been a place for stable connection through networking but also a space of healing by helping foster youth and alumni have a voice that is heard and not just seen, and a seat at the table."

**Michael D. Davis-Thomas**

"The experiences I went through growing up were rough and traumatizing. Because of NFYI, I have been able to hear the stories of other people and have come to realize that I am not alone. Hearing people share their experiences motivates me to get involved because I'm finding out that the things I went through are still happening to foster youth of this generation."

**Andrew Canizal**

# MICHIGAN CHAPTER

NFYI's **Michigan** chapter focuses on mobilizing for foster youth rights and improving the child welfare system across the state. Through in-person retreats, regular virtual meetings, and workshops, members learn the basics of community organizing and receive support bringing these organizing tactics into their local communities.

The Michigan chapter focuses on raising awareness around the unique set of challenges foster youth face as they age out of the system, such as increasing housing options after exiting foster care, access to higher education, help with economic hardship due to COVID-19, and developing life skills. The Michigan chapter also identifies COVID-19 vaccine education, homelessness, juvenile justice, and the foster care-to-prison pipeline as priority issues.



# WASHINGTON, D.C. CHAPTER

While most of NFYI's work in **Washington, D.C.** targets federal legislation to improve child welfare, our newest chapter focuses on local policies, thus creating a multi-pronged approach to improving outcomes for current and former foster youth in the region. The DC Chapter's approach combines compelling storytelling with data-driven analysis of current and proposed legislation.

With members in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia (a region known as the DMV), this chapter is a unique model for organizing and mobilizing youth across states and jurisdictions. The D.C. chapter focuses on the issues of the foster care to prison pipeline, juvenile justice system/criminal justice system reform, and COVID-19 resources and vaccine education.



"Connecting to NFYI in the DC area has helped me adjust to this chapter of my life. They've become like a family to me, and allow me to use my voice, engage, and be involved in positive and lasting change for foster youth at the national level. I love that NFYI supports youth where they are in a variety of ways, and I know I wouldn't be where I am professionally or personally without them."

**Tony Parsons**



"Having a chapter is powerful because it connects to other people who understand our lived experiences. We get to use that experience to ensure others do not experience the same things we did when in care. It is also a great network and support for transition into adulthood."

**April Barcus**

# NEW JERSEY CHAPTER

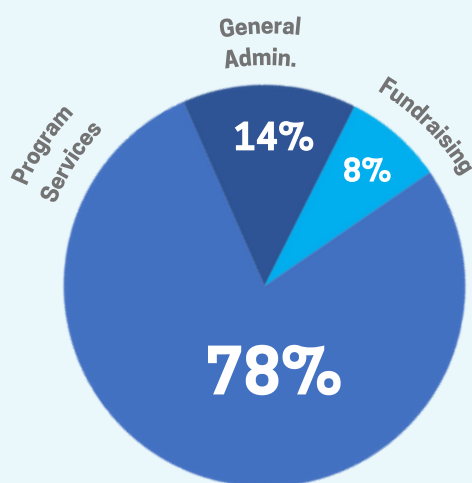
NFYI's **New Jersey** Chapter seeks to educate and organize to improve the support system for current and former foster youth as well as for children and their families who are still in care. The chapter focuses on issues such as COVID-19 vaccine education, housing and homelessness, higher education, and mental health and wellness.

During virtual events and meetings, members learn the basics of community organizing, including how to use organizing tactics in their own communities. They also create ways to collaborate with one another to recruit, educate, and train new members while building relationships with community partners.

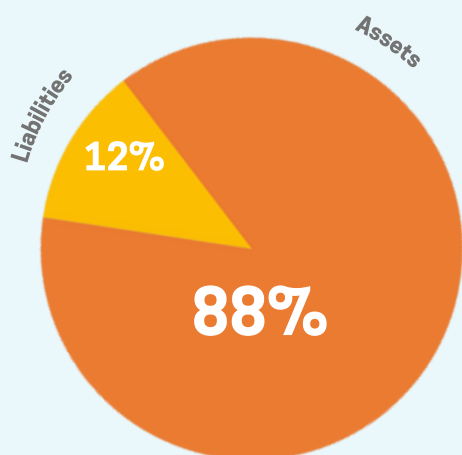


# NFYI FINANCIAL BREAKDOWN

## HOW THE FUNDS ARE USED



## ASSETS TO LIABILITIES



Figures shown for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021

### REVENUE

CONTRIBUTIONS	\$ 489,254
FOUNDATION GRANTS	\$ 760,340
INVESTMENT INCOME, NET OF FEES	\$ (10,300)
INTEREST INCOME	\$ 22
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 1,239,316</b>

### EXPENSES

PROGRAM SERVICES	\$ 745,619
GENERAL & ADMINISTRATIVE	\$ 131,091
FUNDRAISING	\$ 79,014
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 955,724</b>

### ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS	\$ 598,737
INVESTMENTS	\$ 555,504
FIXED ASSETS	\$ 3,017
OTHER NON-CURRENT	\$ 3,959
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 1,161,217</b>

### LIABILITIES

CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$ 142,163
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$ 142,163</b>

### NET ASSETS

UNRESTRICTED	\$ 409,220
TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	\$ 609,834
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 1,019,054</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 1,161,217</b>

# CELEBRATING OUR DONORS

A voice. A platform. The power to create change. The vision of a future where every child thrives and every young person transitions to adulthood with security and support. This is what your gift to NFYI provides.



THANK YOU TO THE 194 INDIVIDUALS, FOUNDATIONS, AND  
COMPANIES WHO DONATED TO SUPPORT OUR WORK THIS YEAR!

Accardo Real Estate  
Ada & Jim and Jim Horwich  
Alan Mirman  
Aleca & Paul Le Blanc  
Alex Wu  
Alexi Papaleonardos  
Allan Alexander  
America's Charities  
Anessa Karney  
Anise Goff  
Annette Radoff  
The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Inc.  
Aparna Sule  
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Chris Winter

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Susan & Robert Rovner  
Symone Williams  
Taylor Construction  
The Barry & Wendy Meyer Foundation  
The California Endowment  
The California Wellness Foundation  
The CW Network  
The Erica & Evan Fisher Family Foundation  
The Hale Foundation

The Horn Foundation  
The Marble Fund  
The Mindling-Schulman Family Foundation  
The Walt Disney Company  
The Wertheimer Foundation  
Thomas Family Charitable Fund  
Thomas Guidugli  
Torye & Bob Anthony  
Vectis DC  
Veronica Williams  
Victoria Rasmussen  
Warner Brothers  
Warner Media / HBO  
Warren & Gail Lieberfarb  
Weingart Foundation  
Wells Fargo  
William Monroe Campbell  
William Scriven  
Women's Circle

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INSPIRING GROUP OF  
CHANGE MAKERS?

Uplift foster youth voices  
today by donating at [NFYI.org](https://www.nfyi.org)

DONATE ■

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FACEBOOK ■

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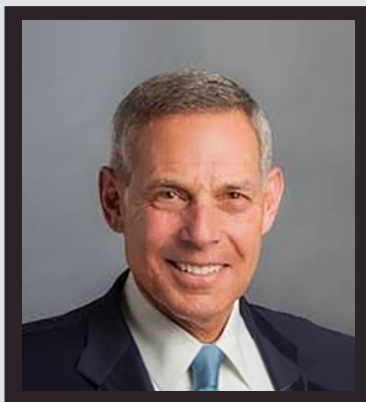
# NFYI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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NFYI's Board of Directors are dedicated to supporting, empowering, and amplifying foster youth voices as they advocate for their communities and become the young leaders of tomorrow.



Chair of the Board,  
**Wendy Smith Ph.D.**



Co-Founding Member of the Board,  
**Conway Collis**



Co-Founding Member of the Board,  
**Congresswoman Karen Bass**



Co-Founding Member of the Board,  
**Yolanda "Cookie" Parker**



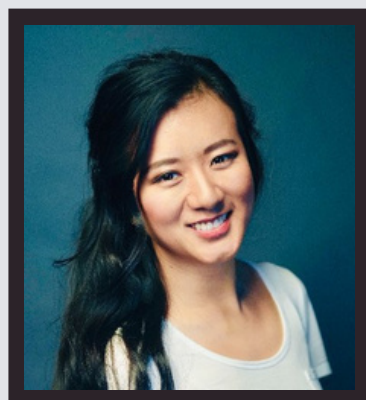
Member of the Board,  
**David A. Herbst**



Member of the Board,  
**Nii-Quartelai Quartey**



Member of the Board,  
**Jewels Elmore Washington**



Member of the Board,  
**Nanxi Liu**



Member of the Board,  
**Marcus Scribner**