**Leasing and Utility Authority for Foster Youth**

Mississippi currently has the age of majority set at 21 years old, restricting certain legal authorities for those between the ages of 18 and 21, including entering into certain contracts. Yet, Mississippi begins releasing foster youth from care at age 18. As part of the 2023 Mississippi Legislative session, Senate Bill 2073 granted authority for young adults ages 18-21 the right to enter into contracts to secure mortgages, own real property, sign leases, and acquire utilities for said properties.

*“All persons eighteen (18) years of age or older, if not otherwise disqualified, or prohibited by law, shall have the capacity to enter into binding contractual relationships affecting personal property, mortgages and real property… Any person who, upon attaining eighteen (18) years of age, but not having reached the age of majority, \* \* \* if not otherwise disqualified or prohibited by law, shall have the capacity to enter into binding agreements to lease real property to be occupied by the person as the actual place of residence, and to secure the necessary utility services necessary to make such place of residence habitable, including, but not limited to, electricity, natural gas, propane, water, sewage, garbage disposal and Internet services.”*

## Who is eligible?

1. All adults 18-21 years of age.

## What does the bill authorize?

1. The right to hold leases for real property for the youth’s actual residence.
2. The right to own or enter into mortgage contracts on real property.
3. The right to sign for utilities for the actual residence, including but not limited to, electricity, natural gas, propane, water, sewage, garbage disposal and internet services.
4. Eligible youth may be subject to all income, credit, and occupancy requirements set by the property manager for all tenants. (not precluded in the legislation).
5. Eligible youth may be subject to all costs associated with securing the lease such as down payments, security deposits, and other upfront fees (not precluded in the legislation).

## Implementation Considerations:

1. Establishing referrals to HUD FYI voucher programs, Rural Development Housing programs, and other emergency housing programs.
2. Leveraging apartment placement programs as a part of Extended Foster Care in Mississippi.
3. Educating housing authorities, management companies, and other entities providing access to housing.

The learn more, review the Conference Report for Senate Bill 2073 of the 2023 Legislative Session.

Relevant and current state law related to Senate Bill 2073 and items noted in this brief: Mississippi Code of 1972: Section 93-19-13; Section 1-3-27; and Section 15-3-11.