

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1259

As Reported by House Committee On:
Children & Family Services
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to providing services for persons through twenty years of age, who are or who have been in foster care.

Brief Description: Providing services for persons twenty years of age who are or who have been in foster care.

Sponsors: Representatives Tokuda, Boldt, Kagi, Schual-Berke, Kenney, Lambert and Edwards.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 1/29/01, 2/8/01 [DP];
Appropriations: 3/1/01, 3/8/01 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Young people up to age 21 who have been in foster care are made eligible for the array of independent living services created by federal law.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Boldt, Republican Co-Chair; Tokuda, Democratic Co-Chair; Kagi, Democratic Vice Chair; Morell, Republican Vice Chair; Ballasiotes, Campbell, Darneille, Dickerson, Miloscia and Pflug.

Staff: Deborah Frazier (786-7152).

Background:

The federal Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106 -169) allows states to extend Medicaid coverage to young people between the ages of 18 and 21 who were in foster care on their 18th birthday. The act also allows states to provide independent living services, including room and board, to young people up to age 21 who become age 18 while in foster care, or are "likely to remain in foster care until age 18.– The act

provides \$140 million nationwide, which is double the amount previously allocated.

Independent living services are designed to assist young people as they transition to adulthood. Services currently may include: assistance with obtaining a high school diploma; vocational training; daily living skills training; and counseling. Approximately 100 youth up to age 21 are provided independent living services each month by the Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

Summary of Bill:

Medicaid coverage is extended to young people between the ages of 18 and 21 who were in foster care on their 18th birthday.

Young people up to age 21 who have been in foster care are made eligible for the array of independent living services created by the federal Foster Care Independence Act of 1999.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Youth don't have medical benefits when they leave foster care at age 18, and end up feeling abandoned all over again. We don't have parents to fall back on, and it is difficult to get a job with medical benefits when you're only 18. At our clinic we see examples of youth who develop big health problems that started as small issues, but weren't treated. We also see young people with mental health needs that go untreated because of the lack of insurance. When we had a gathering of former foster care youth and asked them to talk about their needs, health care was foremost.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Tokuda, prime sponsor; Shantalle Graham, former foster child; Eric Kenezuroff, foster youth; Heidi Wasch, 45th Street Clinic; Paul Barry, Children's Alliance; Kate Grossman, Youthcare; Janis Avery, Treehouse; Rick Williams, Kitsap Foster Care Association; Marianna Conner, Washington Department of Social and Health Services; and James Wilson, Medical Assistance Administration.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do

pass. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Sehlin, Republican Co-Chair; H. Sommers, Democratic Co-Chair; Barlean, Republican Vice Chair; Doumit, Democratic Vice Chair; Lisk, Republican Vice Chair; Alexander, Benson, Boldt, Buck, Clements, Cody, Cox, Dunshee, Fromhold, Gombosky, Grant, Kagi, Keiser, Kenney, Lambert, Linville, Mastin, Mulliken, Pearson, Pflug, Ruderman, D. Schmidt, Schual-Berke, Talcott and Tokuda.

Staff: Heather Flodstrom (786-7391).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Children & Family Services:

The substitute bill removes the section in the original bill that extended Medicaid coverage to young people between the ages of 18 and 21 who were in foster care.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Second Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Original bill) This bill will help move children from foster care to self-sufficiency by providing health care to kids during the transition. Costs will be saved by intervening with health care earlier in the life of a child. Many of these young people have little support from families and need medical care. Often times, minor cuts and bruises get infected because they haven't been treated. We (foster children) are turning to you (the Legislature) as parents, because we don't have any. Not having medical coverage is hurting me now because I am restricted from daily activities. Four hundred youth leave foster care each year, and this bill provides the important support that they need. The amount the department will receive from the federal Chafee Act will likely increase from \$825,000 per year to \$2,368,000 per year. The federal funding does require a 25 percent state match, and the department will use state funds spent on other programs to achieve that match, so no new state funds are needed.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Paul Barry, Children's Alliance; Erik Kenezuroff; and Peggy Brown and James Wilson, Department of Social and Health Services.