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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5480**

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**State of Washington**

**57th Legislature**

**2001 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Fairley, McAuliffe, Eide, Rasmussen, Long, Thibaudeau, Kline, Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Regala and McCaslin)

READ FIRST TIME 02/22/01.

1       AN ACT Relating to children placed in the care of relatives;  
2 adding a new section to chapter 74.08A RCW; creating new sections;  
3 and providing an expiration date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5       NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** It is the intent of the legislature in  
6 enacting this act to:

7       (1) Recognize family relationships in which a relative is the  
8 head of a household that includes a child otherwise at risk of  
9 foster care placement;

10       (2) Enhance family preservation and stability by recognizing  
11 that most children in such placements with relatives do not need  
12 intensive supervision of the placement by the courts or by the  
13 department of social and health services;

14       (3) Recognize that permanency in the best interests of the  
15 child can be achieved through a variety of permanency options,  
16 including long-term relative custody, guardianship, or adoption,  
17 by providing additional placement options and incentives that will  
18 achieve permanency and stability for many children who are

1 otherwise at risk of foster care placement because of abuse,  
2 abandonment, or neglect, but who may successfully be able to be  
3 placed in the care of relatives.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 74.08A  
5 RCW to read as follows:

6 (1) The department shall adopt rules to provide relatives who  
7 are caring for needy children a special monthly relative caregiver  
8 benefit, which shall be in the amount of at least one hundred  
9 dollars per child per month. This benefit shall be available only  
10 for a child who is not the first child in the assistance unit. The  
11 relative caregiver benefit is not intended to supplant any other  
12 grant or benefit for which relatives or the children in their care  
13 are currently eligible.

14 (2) Within available funding, the department shall provide  
15 relative caregivers with a range of support services designed to  
16 assist relatives in parenting the children placed in their care.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The legislature finds that a major  
18 roadblock in understanding kinship caregivers, including  
19 grandparents raising grandchildren as primary caregivers, is a  
20 lack of data. The legislature further finds that nationally over  
21 two million children are being raised solely by their grandparents  
22 or other relatives according to the 1998 United States current  
23 population survey and that split-generation households are equally  
24 common in central cities and in rural areas. The same survey  
25 estimates that thirty-eight thousand nine hundred twenty-two  
26 children in Washington lived in grandparent headed households. The  
27 legislature acknowledges that kinship caregivers may be reluctant  
28 to provide care, but are likely to do so because of emotional,  
29 drug, mental, or alcohol problems by parents, and because the  
30 caregivers do not want the children to go to a foster home and  
31 that the state should encourage, not discourage, responsible  
32 actions by relatives who come forward to care for the children of  
33 kin.

34 The legislature intends to determine the scope of the needs and  
35 concerns of kinship caregivers in Washington. The legislature

1 further intends to determine the availability of existing  
2 services, the need for improved services, the need for better  
3 coordination, and accessibility of those services.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The Washington state institute for public  
5 policy will convene a work group to determine: The number of  
6 families with relatives raising kin, the needs of the relative  
7 kinship caregivers and the children being raised by them, whether  
8 additional services and funding are needed, and issues regarding  
9 access to services and funding sources. The work group must include  
10 representatives from: The aging and adult services administration,  
11 children's administration, economic services administration,  
12 health and rehabilitative services administration, family policy  
13 counsel, Washington counsel for the prevention of child abuse and  
14 neglect, department of health, Washington State University  
15 cooperative extension, and office of the family and children's  
16 ombudsman.

17 The work group must solicit input from kinship caregivers;  
18 county health departments; state agencies dealing with  
19 developmental disabilities or mental health; public health  
20 departments; child and family resource centers; private  
21 organizations representing the interests of kinship caregivers;  
22 kinship support groups; family support centers; the association of  
23 Washington tribes; the children's home society; providers of legal  
24 services to families; and any other persons or groups identified  
25 by the work group that would provide helpful input.

26 The work group report must include: Identification of existing  
27 funding sources, services, and networks; recommendations on how  
28 existing services, funding sources, and networks can be better  
29 coordinated; whether additional funding or services are needed,  
30 how to best obtain them, and their cost; recommendations on what  
31 training and oversight may be required; and other conclusions or  
32 recommendations regarding what the state can do to aid kinship  
33 caregivers.

34 The report and recommendations of the work group shall be  
35 presented to the legislature not later than December 1, 2001.

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1        NEW SECTION.   **Sec. 5.**   Sections 3 and 4 of this act expire  
2   January 30, 2002.

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