

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 2002

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 23, 2006
Ways & Means, February 27, 2006

Title: An act relating to authorizing continuing foster care and support services to age twenty-one to youths who are in state-supervised foster care on their eighteenth birthday.

Brief Description: Authorizing limited continuing foster care and support services up to age twenty-one.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Dickerson, Roberts, Kagi, Kenney and Santos).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/09/06, 97-1.

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/16/06, 2/23/06 [DPA-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/27/06 [DPA(HSC)].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, McAuliffe and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Indu Thomas (786-7536)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Human Services & Corrections.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Kohl-Welles, Parlette, Pflug, Pridemore, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Elaine Deschamps (786-7441)

Background: Children may be placed in out-of-home care as a result of abuse, neglect, abandonment, or family conflict. If and when children become dependents of the state, they remain state dependents until they move to a permanent placement or until they reach 18 years of age.

Currently, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) provides child welfare services to these children. DSHS is granted the authority to extend foster care or group care for individuals from 18 through 20 years of age to enable them to complete a high school or vocational school program

Summary of Amended Bill: The short title of the bill is the "Foster Youth Achievement Act."

Beginning in 2006, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is granted authority to allow up to 50 youth reaching 18 years of age to continue in foster care or group care as needed to participate in or complete a post-high school academic or vocational program, and to receive necessary support and transition services. In 2007 and 2008, 50 additional youth per year may be permitted to continue to remain in foster or group care after reaching the age of 18. A youth who remains eligible for such placement and services pursuant to DSHS rules may continue in foster care or group care until the youth reaches his or her 21st birthday. In order to remain eligible a youth must maintain a 2.0 grade point average and remain enrolled in school. No child support will be collected from parents of young adults, ages 18 - 21 who elect to remain in foster care.

The bill states that nothing in the bill should be construed as creating any of the following:

- 1) an entitlement to services;
- 2) judicial authority to extend the jurisdiction of Juvenile Court under a dependency proceeding to a youth who has turned 18 years of age or to order the provision of services to the youth; or
- 3) a private right of action or claim on the part of any individual, entity, or agency against the DSHS or any contractor of the DSHS.

The bill also authorizes the DSHS to adopt rules establishing eligibility for independent living services and placement for youths pursuant to the bill.

Upon approval by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) board, the WSIPP is required to conduct a study on the outcomes for foster youth who receive continued support, as well as any savings to the state. The WSIPP is permitted to receive non-state funding to conduct the study.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: Provisions regarding eligibility requirements and child support are added.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For (Human Services & Corrections): This bill is essentially the same as the bill that the Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee passed earlier this session. The scholarships which the foster children get require that they maintain a 2.0 grade point average rather than a 2.5 grade point average. Financial aid for these students is also connected to a 2.0 grade point average. It will be cumbersome for the DSHS to work with multiple colleges. The WSIPP study will show that this kind of program can save the state money in the long run. Children in foster care do need additional support to succeed in obtaining high school diplomas and college educations.

Testimony Against (Human Services & Corrections): None.

Who Testified (Human Services & Corrections): PRO: Representative Dickerson, prime sponsor; Jim Theofelis, Mockingbird Society; Danielle Baxter, Foster Parent Association of Washington.

Testimony For (Ways & Means): This bill will save money, and the WSIPP evaluation will demonstrate the efficacy of this policy.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Who Testified (Ways & Means): PRO: Jim Theofelis, Mockingbird Society.