

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5084

As Passed Senate, March 8, 2005

Title: An act relating to postsecondary education and training support for former foster youth.

Brief Description: Establishing a foster youth postsecondary education and training coordination committee.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Hargrove, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen and Regala; by request of Governor Locke).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 2/7/05, 2/17/05 [DPS, DNP].

Passed Senate: 3/8/05, 46-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5084 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Mulliken.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: The Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) administers child welfare and licensing services, including responsibility for youth in foster care. Youth in foster care can receive Independent Living Services (ILS) to help prepare them for independence. For youth emancipating from foster care, ILS programs provide assistance in education, training, housing, and employment. Youth who are determined to be most likely to remain in foster care until age 18 are eligible for independent living programs. Young adults ages 18 through 21 that have emancipated from foster care are eligible to receive assistance with housing, education, and employment training. According to the Children's Administration Performance Report 2003, 470 youth aged out of foster care in the 2002 calendar year. Of these youth, 161 reported that they planned to attend higher education.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) administers the state financial aid programs for higher education. The state need grant and the state work-study program are two of the state financial aid programs. The Legislature appropriated \$236,529,000 in state needs grants in the 2003-05 biennium with an estimated 53,500 students served annually. An

estimated 7,700 students annually received \$34,096,000 in state work-study appropriated in the 2003-05 biennial budget.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Social and Health Services must establish a foster youth postsecondary education and training coordination committee, comprised of staff from the Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Higher Education Coordinating Board. The committee must also include foster youth, former foster youth who have successfully completed a postsecondary education or training program, foster parents, and representatives from nonprofit service agencies and grant-making organizations that have expertise and an interest in further promoting opportunities for foster youth to participate in postsecondary education or training opportunities. The department may also invite other interested stakeholder groups to provide representation on the committee.

The duties of the coordination committee shall include, but are not limited to: assessing statewide access capacity for postsecondary education or training opportunities for current and former foster youth; identifying funding sources available in the state for services to former foster youth to pursue and participate in postsecondary education or training opportunities; reviewing the effectiveness of activities in the state to support former foster youth to pursue and participate in postsecondary education or training opportunities; identifying new activities, or existing activities that should be modified or expanded, to best meet statewide needs; reviewing on an ongoing basis the progress toward improving educational and vocational outcomes for foster youth. The committee expires June 30, 2011.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board, when making annual awards of state need grants, will give special consideration to foster youth. Eligible former foster youth are guaranteed a state need grant from state needs grants that were previously awarded and declined, forfeited, or otherwise unused. For purposes of awarding state need grants, a "former foster youth" is defined as a person who is at least eighteen years of age, but not more than twenty-four years of age, who was a dependent of the Department of Social and Health Services at the time the youth attained the age of eighteen. In addition to special consideration for state need grants, the Higher Education Coordinating Board must give job placement priority to eligible former foster youth participating in the state work-study program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

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

Testimony For: Educational outcomes for foster care youth and former foster care youth are very poor compared to that of their peers. Many of these youth do not complete school and far too few participate in postsecondary education and training. There are a number of reasons why they are not successful in school and do not, generally, transition to postsecondary education and training. One of the key reasons is that they are unaware of or do not have access to guidance and financial support to assist them in preparing for college and vocational training beyond high school. These youth are dependents of the state and the state should make efforts, as any parent would, to provide them with an opportunity to

participate in postsecondary education and training. Guaranteeing foster care youth a state needs grant is the right thing to do.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Rosemary McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Mary Herrick, Washington Education Foundation; Kari Burrell, Governor's Policy Office; Peggy Brown, DSHS; Becki Collins, HECB; Wes Pruitt, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB).