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**Early Learning & Children's  
Services Committee**

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**HB 1716**

**Brief Description:** Supporting educational achievement for children in foster care.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Roberts, Kagi, Hinkle, Haler, Walsh, Appleton, Pettigrew, Dickerson, Darneille, Anderson, Moeller, O'Brien, McDonald, Santos, Wood, Kenney, Simpson and Lantz.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Directs the committee responsible for oversight of education issues relating to children in foster care to convene a stakeholder group and establish a process for grant to implement school stabilization strategies.
- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to request funding or resources to expedite development of an interface between the DSHS database and the databases at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).
- Directs the OSPI to facilitate data sharing agreements with and between local school districts and the DSHS to analyze the effect of strategies implemented on the educational outcomes of children in foster care.
- Requires school districts to respond within two school days to DSHS requests for records of children in foster care.

**Hearing Date:** 2/15/07

**Staff:** Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

**Background:**

The educational stability and continuity of school placement for children in foster care has been a topic of legislation in Washington for the past several years.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

## 2002

The Legislature enacted SB 6709 directing the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), in cooperation with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), to convene a working group and prepare a plan for the Legislature to address educational stability and continuity for school-age children entering short-term foster care, and assure that the best interest of the child is a primary consideration in the school placement of a child in short-term foster care. In November 2002, the DSHS reported to the Legislature with the following recommendations:

- (1) The Children's Administration (CA) of the DSHS and the OSPI should develop a formal policy statement that maintains foster children in their home school whenever practical;
- (2) Foster parent recruitment priorities should shift to develop more foster homes in school districts with high rates of foster care removal;
- (3) An oversight committee consisting of staff from the CA, the OSPI, and advocacy agencies should be established to develop best practice standards to maintain foster children in their home school whenever practical; and
- (4) The CA and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) should work together to ensure that educational stability is addressed during the shelter care hearing by the local CA social worker and the presiding Judge or Commissioner.

## 2003

In response to these recommendations, the Legislature enacted HB 1058 and established in statute a state policy that, whenever practical and in the best interest of the child, children placed into foster care must remain enrolled in the schools they were attending at the time they entered foster care. Administrative regions of the DSHS were directed to develop protocols with school districts specifying strategies for communication, coordination, and collaboration regarding the status and progress of foster children placed in the region, in order to maximize the educational continuity and achievement for foster children. The protocols were to include methods to assure effective sharing of information consistent with state law and federal law.

To accomplish these tasks the DSHS was directed to:

- (1) establish an oversight committee, composed of staff from the CA, the OSPI, and advocacy agencies, to develop strategies for maintaining foster children in the schools they were attending at the time they entered foster care; and
- (2) work with the AOC to develop protocols to ensure that educational stability is addressed during the shelter care hearing.

## 2005

The Legislature enacted HB 1079 and expanded the membership of the Oversight Committee to include the HECB, foster youth, former foster youth, and foster parents. The scope of responsibilities of the committee also was expanded to include promotion of opportunities for foster youth to participate in post-secondary education or training.

### **Summary of Bill:**

#### *Grants for Implementing School Stabilization Strategies*

By August 1, 2007, the Oversight Committee must convene stakeholders to assist the committee with:

- (1) Facilitating strategies for recruitment & retention of foster parents;

- (2) Identifying and selecting strategies to be implemented and evaluated in the 10 school districts with the highest removal rates of school-age children; and
- (3) Developing an request for qualification (RFQ) for grant funding to implement the strategies identified.

By October 31, 2007, the Oversight Committee will select grant recipients and begin disbursing funding to implement the strategies designed to stabilize school enrollment. To the extent possible, the committee will provide technical assistance with implementation and data collection.

By July 1, 2009, the Oversight Committee will report back to the Legislature with additional policy recommendations based on evaluation of the strategies implemented.

*Data Sharing and Transfer of Education Records*

The DSHS must request funding or resources to expedite the interface between State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) and the databases maintained by the OSPI. Pending completion of the interface, the OSPI must facilitate and execute a data sharing agreements with **and between local school districts and** the DSHS in order to:

- (1) Promote school enrollment continuity for children in care; and
- (2) Evaluate and analyze the impact of strategies implemented under the grant funding on the educational achievement of children in foster care.

School districts receiving requests from the CA for the educational records of children who enter foster care must provide the records to the CA with two school days.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 13, 2007.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.