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

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**HB 2088**

**Brief Description:** Supporting the needs of children who have been in foster care.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Darneille, Pettigrew, Ericks, Kenney, O'Brien, Appleton, Campbell, Pedersen, Linville, Moeller, Green, Schual-Berke, Simpson, Ormsby and Roberts.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to establish an individual development account (IDA) for children who remain in foster care six months or longer
- Requires the DSHS to make annual deposits to the IDAs of foster children for each year a child remains in the foster care system.
- Directs the DSHS to establish a pilot program for foster youth community coordinators to assist youth who are transitioning from foster care to independent living.
- Authorizes the DSHS to enter into time-limited voluntary foster placement agreements with former foster youth between the ages of 18 and 20 years.

**Hearing Date:** 2/23/07

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

**Background:**

*Foster Care Services Beyond Age 18*

In general, most foster care benefits are available to children through the age of 18. There are, however, a few exceptions where youth can receive services or remain in a foster care placement beyond the age of 18. For example, a child may remain in a foster care placement up until the age of 19 years for the purpose of completing high school or equivalent training. In this case, the youth continues to qualify for title IV-E federal funding under the Social Security Act.

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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.*

As a result of the enactment of HB 2002 in the 2006 legislative session, up to 50 foster youth per year may be allowed to remain in their foster care placements until age 21 for the purpose of completing a post-secondary educational or vocational program. In this case, the youth does not qualify for title IV-E funding, but may be eligible for Medicaid coverage up to the age of 19.

Youth between the ages of 18 and 21 who were formerly in foster care also may be eligible to receive independent living skills (ILS) services or transitional services if they meet certain criteria. These services can include supports relating to housing, counseling, employment, education, or other appropriate services to complement the youth's own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency. These services may be funded by the state, by Medicaid, or by other federal money under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.

#### Individual Development Accounts

Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) are dedicated savings accounts to assist low-income persons to save money for job training or education, or buy a home or start a business. Saving is encouraged through a match by government or nonprofit organizations. IDAs are similar to 401(k) savings plans offered by some employers. Under federal welfare reform in 1996 and the reform of the state welfare program in 1997, IDAs were encouraged for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients.

In 2004, the Legislature created the IDA program for low-income individuals and foster youth. IDAs may be established by or on behalf of a foster youth to accumulate funds for: post-secondary education or job-training; housing needs; the purchase of a computer if necessary for post-secondary education or job-training; the purchase of a car if necessary for employment; and the payment of a health insurance premium. The state matches, dollar-for-dollar, the money saved in the account up to a maximum match of \$4,000. To participate in the program, a foster youth must contribute to his or her own IDA.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

##### Foster Care Services Beyond Age 18

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is authorized to enter into agreements for a temporary return to a foster care placement with former foster youth who aged out of care at age 18 and have not yet turned 21. The length of stay upon return can be no longer than six months.

##### IDAs

The DSHS is directed to establish an IDA in the amount of \$500 for children who have been in an out-of-home placement for six months or longer. The DSHS must continue making annual contributions of at least \$100 for each year the child remains in an out-of-home placement. The establishment of accounts and subsequent deposits is to be completed at the beginning of each fiscal year.

Foster youth are no longer required to contribute to their own IDA, and the purchase of a car for post-secondary education is added as a permissible use of the money in an IDA established for a foster youth.

##### Foster Youth Community Coordinator Pilot Program

The DSHS must establish a foster youth community coordinator in three regional offices to provide assistance to foster youth who are aging out of the system. The DSHS must select two of the pilot sites by September 1, 2007. The community coordinator will be responsible for:

- (1) facilitating collaboration among organizations serving foster youth who age out of care, and between the DSHS and these organizations;
- (2) facilitating training of entities providing services to transitioning youth; and
- (3) improving communications to foster youth regarding services and programs available to assist them in preparing for independent living.

The program shall include measurable objectives for evaluation and the DSHS must report to the Legislature by January 2009, regarding the evaluation of the program, including whether the objectives have been met.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 7, 2007.

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