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HOUSE BILL 1922

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State of Washington                      60th Legislature                      2007 Regular Session

By Representatives Pedersen, Pettigrew, Miloscia, McIntire, Walsh, Kagi, Appleton, Kenney, Hasegawa and Ormsby

Read first time 02/01/2007. Referred to Committee on Housing.

1            AN ACT Relating to creating an independent youth housing program;  
2 adding new sections to chapter 43.63A RCW; creating new sections; and  
3 making appropriations.

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

5            NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that protecting the  
6 public health, safety, and welfare by providing housing resources to  
7 needy or vulnerable persons, such as young people exiting the state  
8 dependency system, is a fundamental purpose of government. The  
9 legislature further finds that providing such young people with safe  
10 and viable options for housing to avoid homelessness confers a valuable  
11 benefit on the public that constitutes consideration for financial  
12 assistance to such youth.

13            NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.63A RCW  
14 to read as follows:

15            (1) For the purposes of this section:

16            (a) "Department" means the department of community, trade, and  
17 economic development;

18            (b) "Eligible youth" means an individual who:

1 (i) On or after September 1, 2006, is at least eighteen, was a  
2 dependent of the state under chapter 13.34 RCW in the month before his  
3 or her eighteenth birthday, and has not yet reached the age of twenty-  
4 three;

5 (ii) Except as provided in subsection (3)(b)(ii) of this section,  
6 has a total income from all sources, except for temporary sources that  
7 include, but are not limited to, overtime wages, bonuses, or short-term  
8 temporary assignments, that does not exceed fifty percent of the area  
9 median income;

10 (iii) Is not receiving services under RCW 74.13.031(10)(b);

11 (iv) Complies with other eligibility requirements the department  
12 may establish;

13 (c) "Independent housing" means a housing unit that is not owned by  
14 or located within the home of the eligible youth's biological parents  
15 or any of the eligible youth's former foster care families or  
16 dependency guardians. "Independent housing" may include a unit in a  
17 transitional or other supportive housing facility;

18 (d) "Fair market rent" means the fair market rent in each county of  
19 the state, as determined by the United States department of housing and  
20 urban development;

21 (e) "Individual development account" or "account" means an account  
22 established by contract between a low-income individual and a  
23 sponsoring organization for the benefit of the low-income individual  
24 and funded through periodic contributions by the low-income individual  
25 that are matched with contributions by or through the sponsoring  
26 organization; and

27 (f) "Subcontractor organization" means an eligible organization  
28 described under RCW 43.185A.040 that contracts with the department to  
29 administer the independent youth housing program.

30 (2) The independent youth housing program is created in the  
31 department to provide housing stipends to eligible youth to be used for  
32 independent housing. The department must serve the maximum number of  
33 eligible youth possible within the available funding for the program.  
34 The department shall solicit input from a variety of stakeholders  
35 involved with dependent youth, homeless youth, and homeless young  
36 adults to develop a plan for the design, implementation, and operation  
37 of the independent youth housing program. The department, in  
38 collaboration with the department of social and health services, shall:

1 (a) Develop, administer, supervise, and monitor the independent  
2 youth housing program; and

3 (b) Ensure that the independent youth housing program is integrated  
4 and aligned with all existing and future services and programs designed  
5 to assist foster youth transition to independent living.

6 (3) To receive services under the independent youth housing  
7 program, an eligible youth must:

8 (a) Sign a program compliance agreement stating that the youth  
9 agrees to:

10 (i) Timely pay his or her portion of the independent housing cost;  
11 (ii) Comply with an independent living plan created in consultation  
12 with an assigned case manager; and

13 (iii) Comply with other program requirements and rules the  
14 department may establish;

15 (b) Maintain his or her status as an eligible youth, except that if  
16 the youth's total income exceeds fifty percent of the area median  
17 income during the course of his or her participation in the program,  
18 the department shall develop rules to allow the youth to remain in the  
19 program and continue to receive a housing stipend. The rules must  
20 require that the youth agrees to participate in the individual  
21 development account program established under RCW 43.31.460 and invest  
22 a portion, to be determined by the department, of his or her income  
23 that exceeds fifty percent of the area median income in:

24 (i) An individual development account; or

25 (ii) If the youth is unable to participate in the individual  
26 development account program due to the program's capacity limits or  
27 eligibility requirements, an alternate supervised savings program  
28 approved by the department, as long as the youth qualifies for and may  
29 participate in this program.

30 (4) An eligible youth may participate in the independent youth  
31 housing program for any duration of time and may apply to enroll in the  
32 program with the department at any time.

33 (5)(a) A youth may be terminated from the independent youth housing  
34 program for a violation of department rules.

35 (b) Youth who are terminated from the program may apply to the  
36 department for reenrollment in the program through a procedure to be  
37 developed by the department. The department shall establish criteria

1 to evaluate a reenrollment application and may accept or deny a  
2 reenrollment application based on the department's evaluation.

3 (6) Under the independent youth housing program, the department of  
4 social and health services shall:

5 (a) Refer a potential eligible youth to the department before the  
6 youth's eighteenth birthday, if feasible, and indicate, if known, where  
7 the youth plans to reside after exiting foster care; and

8 (b) Collaborate with the department to provide information to all  
9 youth aged sixteen or older, who are dependents of the state under  
10 chapter 13.34 RCW, about the independent youth housing program, and  
11 encourage all dependents of the state nearing their eighteenth birthday  
12 to consider applying for enrollment in the program.

13 (7) Under the independent youth housing program, the department  
14 may:

15 (a) Adopt rules for the program;

16 (b) Contract with one or more eligible organizations described  
17 under RCW 43.185A.040 to provide services and conduct administrative  
18 activities as described in subsection (8) of this section. Moneys  
19 awarded to these subcontractor organizations may be used for housing  
20 stipends, security deposits, first and last month's rent stipends, case  
21 management program costs, and administrative costs. Administrative  
22 costs for each subcontractor organization may not exceed twelve percent  
23 of the estimated total annual grant amount to the subcontractor  
24 organization;

25 (c)(i) Determine the eligibility of youth referred by the  
26 department of social and health services and of youth who contact and  
27 apply to the department directly and (ii) refer eligible youth to the  
28 designated subcontractor organization administering the program in the  
29 area in which the youth intends to reside;

30 (d) Develop a method for determining the amount of the housing  
31 stipend, and first and last month's rent and security deposit where  
32 applicable, to be dedicated to participating youth. The method for  
33 determining a housing stipend must take into account a youth's age, the  
34 fair market rent for the area in which the youth lives or intends to  
35 live, and a variety of possible living situations, including when youth  
36 are custodial parents of young children or two or more youth  
37 participating in the program choose to live together. The amount of  
38 housing stipends must be adjusted, by a method and formula established

1 by the department, to promote the successful transition for youth to  
2 complete self-sufficiency over time. All housing stipends under this  
3 section are payable only to a landlord or housing manager of any type  
4 of independent housing; and

5 (e) Review and report on the performance of subcontractor  
6 organizations, as well as the performance of the program as a whole, to  
7 the appropriate committees of the legislature annually by December 31st  
8 of each year, beginning in 2007. The report must include, at a  
9 minimum, an update on the following program performance measures for  
10 enrolled youth:

11 (i) Increases in housing stability;

12 (ii) Increases in economic self-sufficiency;

13 (iii) Increases in independent living skills;

14 (iv) Increases in education and job training attainment; and

15 (v) Decreases in the use of all state-funded services over time.

16 (8) Under the independent youth housing program, subcontractor  
17 organizations shall:

18 (a) Enroll eligible youth who are referred by the department and  
19 who choose to reside in their assigned service area;

20 (b) Issue housing stipends as well as security deposits and first  
21 and last month's rent, where applicable;

22 (c) Monitor participating youth's housing status;

23 (d) Evaluate participating youth's eligibility and compliance with  
24 department rules at least twice a year;

25 (e) Assist participating youth to develop and implement an  
26 independent living plan focused on obtaining and retaining independent  
27 housing;

28 (f) Educate participating youth on tenant rights and  
29 responsibilities;

30 (g) Provide support to participating youth in the form of general  
31 case management and information and referral services;

32 (h) Connect participating youth, when possible, with individual  
33 development account programs, other financial literacy programs, and  
34 other programs that are designed to help young people acquire economic  
35 independence and self-sufficiency; and

36 (i) Submit expenditure and performance reports to the department on  
37 a time schedule determined by the department.

38 (9) This section does not create:

- 1 (a) An entitlement to services;
- 2 (b) Judicial authority to extend the jurisdiction of juvenile court
- 3 in a proceeding under chapter 13.34 RCW to a youth who has reached the
- 4 age of eighteen or to order the provision of services to the youth; or
- 5 (c) A private right of action or claim on the part of any
- 6 individual, entity, or agency against the department, the department of
- 7 social and health services, or any contractor of the departments.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 43.63A RCW  
9 to read as follows:

10 The independent youth housing account is created in the custody of  
11 the state treasurer. All revenue directed to the independent youth  
12 housing program shall be deposited into this account. Expenditures  
13 from the account may only be used for the independent youth housing  
14 program as described in this act. Only the director of the department  
15 or the director's designee may authorize expenditures from the account.  
16 The account is subject to allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW,  
17 but an appropriation is not required for expenditures.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** Beginning in September 2008, the Washington  
19 state institute for public policy shall conduct a study measuring the  
20 outcomes for youth who are participating or who have participated in  
21 the independent youth housing program created in section 2 of this act.  
22 The institute shall issue a report containing its preliminary findings  
23 to the legislature by December 1, 2009, and a final report by December  
24 1, 2010.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** The sum of two million dollars, or as much  
26 thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the biennium ending  
27 June 30, 2009, from the Washington housing trust fund to the department  
28 of community, trade, and economic development, and provided solely for  
29 housing stipends administered through the independent youth housing  
30 program. Any of the money that is not obligated by the department by  
31 January 31, 2009, shall be added to the housing assistance program  
32 under chapter 43.185 RCW.

33 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** (1) The sum of two hundred fifty thousand  
34 dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for

1 the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008, from the general fund to the  
2 independent youth housing program account created in section 3 of this  
3 act for the purpose of implementing and operating the independent youth  
4 housing program.

5 (2) The sum of two hundred fifty thousand dollars, or as much  
6 thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending  
7 June 30, 2009, from the general fund to the independent youth housing  
8 program account created in section 3 of this act for the purpose of  
9 implementing and operating the independent youth housing program.

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