
HOUSE BILL 2657

State of Washington 62nd Legislature 2012 Regular Session

By Representatives Roberts, Kagi, Maxwell, and Kenney

Read first time 01/20/12. Referred to Committee on Health & Human Services Appropriations & Oversight.

1 AN ACT Relating to adoption support expenditures; adding a new
2 section to chapter 74.13A RCW; and creating new sections.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the current state
5 adoption support policy to encourage, within available funds, the
6 adoption of certain hard to place children, has expedited permanency
7 for children who are unable to reunify with their family and has
8 resulted in savings otherwise spent on foster care.

9 The legislature also finds that current economic conditions have
10 reduced state funds available for many critical programs. The
11 legislature further finds that adoption support expenditures continue
12 to increase. Given these realities, the legislature finds there is a
13 need to control adoption support costs without adversely impacting
14 permanency for state dependent children.

15 The legislature acknowledges that the best way to reduce adoption
16 support and foster care expenditures is to safely prevent children from
17 entering the foster care system. However, the legislature also finds
18 that the recent prospective reduction to adoption support payments set

1 forth in chapter 50, Laws of 2011 1st sp. sess. has not, to date,
2 adversely impacted permanency for foster children in need of adoptive
3 homes.

4 Therefore, the legislature intends to continue the adoption
5 assistance rate reduction beyond the period set forth in the operating
6 budget, while focusing on sustainable long-term efforts to prevent
7 children from entering the foster care system, such as pursuing a
8 potential federal Title IV-E waiver, which if granted, would allow
9 Washington to reinvest dollars otherwise spent on foster care in
10 prevention programs.

11 The legislature also finds that many adoptive parents spend
12 adoption support payments on additional mental health services for
13 adoptive children that are not currently covered by existing public
14 programs. The legislature intends to offset adoption support payment
15 expenditures by facilitating efforts to improve the access and quality
16 of existing mental health services for adoptive families in the long
17 term.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 74.13A RCW
19 to read as follows:

20 (1) To ensure expenditures continue to remain within available
21 funds as required by RCW 74.13A.005 and 74.13A.020, the secretary shall
22 not set the amount of any adoption assistance payment or payments, made
23 pursuant to RCW 26.33.320 and 74.13A.005 through 74.13A.080, to more
24 than ninety percent of the foster care maintenance payment for that
25 child had he or she remained in a foster family home during the same
26 period. Consistent with chapter 50, Laws of 2011 1st sp. sess., this
27 subsection does not apply to adoption assistance agreements in
28 existence on June 15, 2011.

29 (2) The department must ensure that training for department workers
30 charged with negotiating adoption support agreements are trained to
31 provide accurate and consistent information to all adoptive parents
32 regarding their ability to access adoption support payments, how to
33 navigate the adoption support negotiation process, and their ability to
34 access funds for exceptional circumstances should they arise.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The department of social and health
36 services, division of behavioral health and recovery, shall convene a

1 work group as part of its children's mental health redesign process, to
2 develop recommendations to better address the mental health service
3 needs of adoptive families and reduce the need for adoptive families to
4 spend adoption support payments on mental health services. The work
5 group must include, but is not limited to, representatives from the
6 department of social and health services children's administration, the
7 health care authority, the University of Washington department of
8 psychiatry, the evidence-based practice institute, regional support
9 networks, mental health service providers, health plans, primary care
10 providers, Tribes, adoptive families, and representatives from other
11 relevant organizations as needed. The work group shall issue its
12 recommendations to the legislature no later than December 15, 2012.

--- END ---