

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2335

As Reported by House Committee On:
Early Learning & Human Services

Title: An act relating to extended foster care services.

Brief Description: Concerning extended foster care services.

Sponsors: Representatives Roberts, Parker, Kagi, Carlyle, Freeman, Goodman, Walsh, Sawyer, Senn, Zeiger, Jinkins, Muri, Reykdal and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 1/27/14, 1/29/14 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Amended Bill

- Expands eligibility criteria to allow a youth to request extended foster care services if the youth engages in employment for 80 hours or more per month or if the youth is not able to engage in any established qualifying activities due to a documented medical condition.
- Specifies that a youth diagnosed with chemical dependency must be engaged in chemical dependency treatment in order to be eligible for extended foster care services.
- Defines "medical condition" to mean a short-term or long-term physical or mental health condition as verified and documented by any licensed health care provider.
- Adds an effective date of March 1, 2015.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Freeman, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Fagan, Goodman, MacEwen, Ortiz-Self, Roberts, Sawyer, Senn, Young and Zeiger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Scott, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

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.

Staff: Lindsay Lanham (786-7120).

Background:

In 2008 the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was signed into federal law. Among its many provisions, the "Fostering Connections" legislation created a pathway for states to use Title IV-E funds, or foster care funding, to extend foster care services to youth ages 19-21 years if the youth engages in certain qualifying activities.

In 2011 the Legislature enacted Second Substitute House Bill 1128 (2SHB 1128), which established the Extended Foster Care program in Washington. Second Substitute House Bill 1128 specifies that youth ages 19-21 years are eligible for extended foster care services if the youth is participating in or completing a secondary education program or a secondary education equivalency program. Extended foster care services may include, but are not limited to foster care placement or placement in a supervised independent living setting, medical or dental services, transitional living services, case management, and assistance meeting basic needs.

In 2012 the Legislature passed Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2592 which expanded extended foster care eligibility to include youth who are enrolled, or have applied for and demonstrate intent to enroll in a postsecondary academic or postsecondary vocational program. In 2013 the Legislature enacted Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5405, which among its many provisions expanded qualifying activities to allow a youth to request extended foster care services if the youth has an open dependency case at age 18 years and is participating in a program or activity designed to promote employment or remove barriers to employment.

Summary of Amended Bill:

House Bill 2335 (HB 2335) as amended specifies that a youth is eligible for extended foster care services if the youth engages in employment for 80 hours or more per month. Additionally, HB 2335 as amended specifies that a youth is eligible for extended foster care services if the youth is not able to engage in any established qualifying activities due to a documented medical condition. A youth diagnosed with chemical dependency must be engaged in chemical dependency treatment in order to be eligible for extended foster care services. House Bill 2335 as amended also defines "medical condition" to mean a short-term or long-term physical or mental health condition as verified and documented by any licensed health care provider regulated by a disciplining authority. House Bill 2335 as amended concludes by adding an effective date of March 1, 2015.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The amended bill: specifies that a youth diagnosed with chemical dependency must be engaged in chemical dependency treatment in order to be eligible for extended foster care services.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect on March 1, 2015.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill implements all of the federally allowable qualifying categories for extended foster care under the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act. There is a delayed effective date to give the Children's Administration ample time for implementation.

Since 2006 Washington devised an innovative program for youth aging out of the foster care system. Washington has been a leader in this movement to ensure that foster care is not a pipeline to the prison system or homelessness. Prior to implementing programs such as extended foster care, the foster system was a feeder to adult homelessness. In Washington, 35 percent of the young people that age out of foster care are homeless within a year. Youth need extended foster care services so that they are able to develop the skills necessary to have a successful adult life. The research suggests that extended foster care services delay early parenting, stop criminal behavior, and saves the state money.

The extended foster care program provides financial stability and support to youth. The extended foster care program created a pathway for one youth to engage in an educational program, access health services, have a safe place to call home, and have a support network to call family. The extended foster care program can make the difference from living a life to survive or living a life to thrive. Having access to extended foster care services allowed another youth to remain in a foster home so the youth was able to focus on education and employment. Youth with a medical diagnosis are the most vulnerable and need extended foster care services. Another youth described how foster youth who turn age 18 are tossed into the world with no support and no place to go, unless they have access to extended foster care services. The extended foster care services are life-changing for a youth. Extended foster care services give youth opportunities and remove barriers to help youth have successful adulthoods.

(Neutral) There is a fiscal note concern with this legislation. The qualifying category, youth with a diagnosed medical condition, is going to include children that have the most expensive services.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Roberts, prime sponsor; Jim Theofelis, Mykell Daniels, Deonate Cruz, and Mikhail Stewart, Mockingbird Society.

(Neutral) Jennifer Strus, Department of Social and Health Services.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.