

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2330

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

**Title:** An act relating to expansion of extended foster care eligibility.

**Brief Description:** Concerning expansion of extended foster care eligibility.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Fey, Goodman, Tarleton, McBride, Wylie, Slatter, Stonier, Kagi, Senn, Frame, Stanford, Reeves, Kilduff, Clibborn, Macri, Stambaugh, Jinkins, Ryu, Graves, Doglio, Valdez, Ortiz-Self, Riccelli and Orwall.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Early Learning & Human Services: 1/10/18, 1/17/18 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Removes the requirement that a youth be in foster care at the time that he or she reaches age 18 to be eligible for extended foster care.
- Extends the time period that an individual can request extended foster care from up to age 19 to age 21.
- Allows individuals to unenroll and reenroll in extended foster care an unlimited number of times.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Frame, Goodman, Griffey, Kilduff, Lovick, Muri and Ortiz-Self.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Klippert.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

**Staff:** Luke Wickham (786-7146).

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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.*

## **Background:**

### Extended Foster Care Program.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) operates the extended foster care program which allows individuals who are dependent and in foster care at age 18 to receive services if that youth is:

- enrolled in a secondary education program or equivalent program;
- enrolled and participating in a postsecondary academic or postsecondary vocational program, or has applied for and can demonstrate an intention to timely enroll in a postsecondary academic or vocational program;
- participating in a program or activity designed to promote employment or remove barriers to employment;
- engaged in employment for 80 or more hours per month; or
- not able to engage in the above activities due to a documented medical condition.

For eligible youth that choose to participate in the extended foster care program on his or her eighteenth birthday, the dependency court action will continue. An eligible youth may choose to participate in the extended foster care after his or her eighteenth birthday and until the youth turns 19 years old through a voluntary placement agreement with the DSHS.

The DSHS must allow a youth who has received extended foster care services but lost his or her eligibility to reenter the extended foster care program through a voluntary placement agreement when he or she meets the criteria again.

The services that youth may receive through the extended foster care program include:

- foster care placement or supervised independent living setting placement;
- medical (including mental health);
- dental;
- independent living skills;
- case management through the DSHS; and
- referrals to community resources.

On January 10, 2018, there were 609 youth receiving extended foster care services.

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## **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The requirement that a youth must be in foster care at the time that he or she reaches age 18 to be eligible for extended foster care is eliminated. The time period when an individual, who is eligible for extended foster care, may request extended foster care services is extended from up to age 19 to age 21. The limitation that individuals can reenroll in extended foster care once is eliminated. The substitute bill allows individuals to reenroll an unlimited number of times.

## **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill makes technical changes and creates an effective date of July 1, 2018.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect on July 1, 2018.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) It is difficult to determine the behavior of 18 year olds. Most people need family support when turning age 18. Extended foster care supports youth as they transition from age 18 to adulthood. The 2017 bill allowed individuals to reenroll in foster care once, but advocates indicate there should be more opportunities to access the program. Many youth exiting juvenile justice institutions exit to homelessness, and this would provide an additional option for those youth.

Providing this safety net is a wise investment. The hope here is that the state will provide a choice in getting help. Approximately 500 kids age out of foster care each year. There could be an additional 1,500 individuals in the extended foster care system. This legislation still requires that youth meet the eligibility criteria. Even if kids meet that eligibility criteria, there are still kids who are not eligible for the extended foster care program. The "in foster care" requirement is related to Title IV E eligibility. A youth that has been returned home to his or her parents at age 18 on a trial basis cannot be eligible for extended foster care. Youth who are on the run at age 18, for example a youth who is being trafficked, are not currently eligible for extended foster care. The age 19 enrollment requirement is a function of the defunct "Foster Care to 21" program.

This bill also allows multiple reentries into the extended foster care program. The individuals who may reenter extended foster care more than once are generally youth who struggle with mental health and substance use.

The accountability in the extended foster care program is the eligibility requirement that individuals are enrolled in an education program or working.

Some youth do not meet the eligibility requirements until after age 19, and allowing extended foster care eligibility beyond age 19 provides motivation for youth to meet the eligibility criteria. Not everyone has the same support group; this bill would help provide that support to former foster youth. This bill would allow individuals who turn 18 while in juvenile rehabilitation institutions to access extended foster care.

Extended foster care prevents youth from being alone in the world. Without extended foster care, youth wouldn't have a safety net to explore his or her options and his or her place in the world. Without this safety net, youth will age out of foster care into homelessness.

Extended foster care has proven its value. Housing individuals in residential treatment or incarceration is much more expensive than this program. The early research shows

promising results from the extended foster care program. If individuals are provided the same support as families provide youth, these youth will be successful.

Youth will not make a game of leaving and coming back. More youth will try to go out on their own knowing that they may have the support of extended foster care if they can't make it on their own.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The Department of Social and Health Services cannot support this legislation as funding was not provided in the Governor's budget. As of January 10, 2018, there are 609 individuals in the extended foster care program. There are approximately 10 youth who exit extended foster care per month. One hundred and forty one individuals in extended foster care are in college, 67 are employed part time, and 10 are eligible due to a documented medical condition.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Fey, prime sponsor; Mary Van Cleve, Columbia Legal Services; Brianna Winslow and Azia Ruff, Mockingbird Society; and Jim Theofelis, A Way Home Washington.

(Other) Connie Lambert-Eckel, Department of Social and Health Services.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.