

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6222

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: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Carlyle, O'Ban, Frockt, Darneille, Walsh, Zeiger, Palumbo, Hasegawa, Billig, Hunt and Kuderer).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 2/23/18 [DP].

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.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: 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 2 members: Representatives McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Klippert.

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

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.

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 who 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.

Summary of 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 bill allows individuals to reenroll an unlimited number of times.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect July 1, 2018.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is a legacy committee on the extended foster care issue. Initially there was resistance to the concept of providing extended foster care. Washington started a pilot program on extended foster care, and it has expanded into this program. College tuition is the most expensive extended care program. Both state and national research shows that individuals are not homeless when receiving this extended foster care service. The return on investment for youth that participate in this program is about \$5 for every dollar invested in this program. If young people are taken care of and provided safe housing, it makes sense that those youth will have better outcomes in life. Kids are not unenrolling and reenrolling "willy nilly." The individual who will be helped by the ability to reenroll is the youth who is out on his or her own and loses his or her job. The opportunity to reenroll gives youth a chance to get back on his or her feet. Youth are more likely to take a risk and go out on his or her own when knowing that this program is available.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Jim Theofolis, A Way Home Washington; and Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.