

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1867

As of March 21, 2017

Title: An act relating to improving transitions in extended foster care to increase housing stability for foster youth.

Brief Description: Improving transitions in extended foster care to increase housing stability for foster youth.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Fey, Stambaugh, Senn, Kagi, Kilduff, Appleton, Graves, Hudgins, Orwall, Ryu, Sells, Stanford, Robinson, McDonald, Ortiz-Self, Doglio, Slatter, Tharinger and Ormsby).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/03/17, 95-2.

Committee Activity: Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 3/15/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows eligible youth to unenroll and reenroll in the extended foster care program an unlimited number of times between ages 18 and 21.
- Requires the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to conduct a study related to extended foster care and issue a preliminary report by December 1, 2018, and a final report by December 1, 2019.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7444)

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 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

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- 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 their eighteenth birthday, the dependency court action will continue. Eligible youth may choose to participate in the extended foster care after their eighteenth birthday and until the youth turns 19 years old through a voluntary placement agreement with the DSHS.

The services that youth may receive through the extended foster care program include foster care placement or supervised independent living setting placement; medical; dental; independent living skills; case management through the DSHS; and referrals to community resources.

In October 2016, there were 569 youth receiving extended foster care services.

Summary of Bill: Youth who have received extended foster care services are allowed to reenter the program through a voluntary placement agreement when they meet the criteria again. Individuals who are eligible for extended foster care services may unenroll and reenroll in extended foster care an unlimited number of times between ages 18 and 21.

The Washington Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) shall conduct a study measuring the outcomes for youth who have received extended foster care services. The study should include a measurement of any savings to state and local governments and compare the outcome of youth who have received extended foster care to youth who aged out of foster care when they reached the age of 18. To the extent possible, the study should also include a comparison of other state extended foster care programs and review of studies that have been completed measuring the outcomes of those programs. WSIPP is to issue a preliminary report of its findings by December 1, 2018, and a final report by December 1, 2019. WSIPP is authorized to accept nonstate funds to conduct this study.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 7, 2017.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. If specific funding is not provided for this act, this act is null and void.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The idea for this bill came from the Office of Homeless Youth Advisory Committee. Some youth think they don't need extended foster care (EFC) but later realize they do. Many youth that go without EFC end up homeless which has a cost but also a consequence of no employment or education. The WSIPP evaluation is needed to help us determine what is and isn't working. Federal law allows youth to reenter EFC an unlimited number of times. There may be instances where a youth has a gap in eligibility, like if a youth finishes high school but hasn't found a job yet. Providing this flexibility to EFC would increase the success of EFC.

OTHER: Allowing youth to continuously exit and reenter EFC would be an administrative nightmare. Reestablishing eligibility is expensive, also 20 percent of EFC are in BRS which is expensive. BRS is not forecasted, there is a finite pool of money. The fiscal note goes through various scenarios since we don't know how many times a youth will exit and re-enter EFC. We know 53 youth exit before the age of 21.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Jake Fey, Prime Sponsor; Brianna Winslow, The Mockingbird Society; Mary Van Cleve, Columbia Legal Services.

OTHER: Jennifer Strus, DSHS.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.