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HOUSE BILL 2877

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State of Washington

65th Legislature

2018 Regular Session

By Representatives Kagi, Dent, Reeves, Frame, Caldier, Kilduff, Tarleton, Johnson, Eslick, Ortiz-Self, Kloba, and Pollet

Read first time 01/19/18. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & Human Services.

1 AN ACT Relating to equitable educational outcomes for foster  
2 children and youth from preschool to postsecondary education;  
3 creating new sections; and providing an effective date.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1)(a) The legislature finds that children  
6 and youth impacted by the foster care system continue to experience  
7 worse educational outcomes compared to their peers who do not  
8 experience foster care. Trauma and loss, changes in homes and  
9 schools, and a lack of early childhood education cause them to lag  
10 behind their peers. Foster youth experience school changes twenty-  
11 eight percent more than children with no history in the foster care  
12 system, disrupting academic progress. Children and youth in foster  
13 care experience disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates and  
14 require special education services at four times the rate of their  
15 peers. As a result, only forty-three percent of Washington youth in  
16 foster care graduate from high school on time as compared to seventy-  
17 eight percent of their peers. Fewer than three percent of foster  
18 youth nationally earn a four-year college degree as compared to  
19 twenty-eight percent of their peers. Additionally, children and youth  
20 of color are disproportionately represented in foster care and  
21 achieve educational outcomes at significantly lower rates than their

1 white peers. Foster care alumni who do not achieve these educational  
2 outcomes experience high rates of unemployment, poverty,  
3 homelessness, and incarceration.

4 (b) The legislature further finds that students experiencing  
5 homelessness face similar challenges and negative educational  
6 outcomes as their peers in foster care. Homeless students may also be  
7 former foster youth, or foster youth may be formerly homeless  
8 students.

9 (c) Despite these odds, children and youth in foster care want to  
10 and deserve to have the opportunity to succeed in school. In  
11 response, the legislature intends to provide an equitable education  
12 to all foster children and youth regardless of setting, placement  
13 permanency, or current or potential involvement with the juvenile  
14 justice system.

15 (2) The legislature also finds that, over the past decade, it has  
16 focused on advancing educational outcomes of foster youth, leading to  
17 the development of an array of programs to improve educational  
18 outcomes. Washington has been a leader in addressing data sharing,  
19 coordinated service delivery, and the development of targeted  
20 financial aid and student support programs. Recent legislation in  
21 2016 required coordinating certain services and programs to improve  
22 educational outcomes. On the federal level, the every student  
23 succeeds act of 2015 and the fostering connections act of 2008  
24 require state child welfare and education agencies to collaborate to  
25 support educational outcomes, school stability, transportation, and  
26 mandatory data sharing and reporting.

27 (3) Therefore, the legislature intends with this act to  
28 powerfully leverage current collaboration and investments to align  
29 services, outcome measures, accountability, and resources to achieve  
30 educational equity for children and youth in foster care by 2027. The  
31 goal of this effort is that children and youth in foster care achieve  
32 educational outcomes at the same rate as their general student  
33 population peers throughout the educational continuum from preschool  
34 to postsecondary education. Where possible, this collaboration should  
35 include an analysis of where the foster care continuum could align  
36 with the homeless youth continuum.

37 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) For the purposes of this section,  
38 "children and youth in foster care" means children and youth under  
39 the placement and care authority of the department of children,

1 youth, and families, a federally recognized tribe, or another child-  
2 placing agency; and children and youth who have experienced foster  
3 care and have achieved permanency.

4 (2) The department of children, youth, and families, the office  
5 of the superintendent of public instruction, and the student  
6 achievement council must convene a work group with aligned  
7 nongovernmental agencies to create a plan for children and youth in  
8 foster care to facilitate educational equity with their general  
9 student population peers and to close the disparities between racial  
10 and ethnic groups by 2027. The work group must:

11 (a) Review the educational outcomes of children and youth in  
12 foster care, including:

13 (i) Kindergarten readiness, early grade reading, school  
14 stability, high school completion, postsecondary enrollment, and  
15 postsecondary completion; and

16 (ii) Disaggregated data by race and ethnicity;

17 (b) Consider the outcomes, needs, and services for children and  
18 youth in care, and the specific needs of children and youth of color  
19 and those with special education needs;

20 (c) Map current education support services, including  
21 eligibility, service levels, service providers, outcomes, service  
22 coordination, data sharing, and overall successes and challenges;

23 (d) Engage stakeholders in participating in the analysis and  
24 development of recommendations, including foster youth, foster  
25 parents and relative caregivers, birth parents, caseworkers, school  
26 districts and educators, early learning providers, and federally  
27 recognized tribes;

28 (e) Make recommendations for an optimal continuum of education  
29 support services to foster children and youth from preschool to  
30 postsecondary education that would provide for shared and sustainable  
31 accountability to reach the goal of educational parity, including  
32 recommendations to:

33 (i) Align indicators and outcomes across organizations and  
34 programs;

35 (ii) Improve racial equity in education outcomes;

36 (iii) Ensure access to consistent and accurate annual educational  
37 outcomes data;

38 (iv) Address system barriers such as data sharing;

1 (v) Detail options for governance and oversight to ensure  
2 educational services are continually available to foster children  
3 regardless of status;

4 (vi) Detail support structure that will ensure that educational  
5 records, educational needs, individualized education plans, credits,  
6 and other records will follow the children and youth when they  
7 transition from district to district or to another educational  
8 program or facility;

9 (vii) Explore the option of creating a specific statewide school  
10 district that supports the needs of and tracks the educational  
11 progress of children and youth in foster care; and

12 (viii) Identify where opportunities exist to align policy,  
13 practices, and supports for students experiencing homelessness and  
14 foster students; and

15 (f) Outline which recommendations can be implemented using  
16 existing resources and regulations and which require policy,  
17 administrative, and resource adjustments.

18 (3) The work group should seek to develop an optimal continuum of  
19 services using research-based program strategies and to provide for  
20 prevention, early intervention, and seamless transitions.

21 (4) The work group must provide a report on its analysis as  
22 described under this section, the recommended plan, and any  
23 legislative and administrative changes needed to facilitate  
24 educational equity for children and youth in foster care with their  
25 general student population peers by 2027 to the legislature by  
26 December 31, 2018.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** This act takes effect July 1, 2018.

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