
Human Services & Early Learning Committee

2SSB 5718

Brief Description: Establishing the child welfare housing assistance program that provides housing assistance to parents reunifying with a child and parents at risk of having a child removed.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Saldaña, Hasegawa, Nguyen, O'Ban, Das, Keiser, Kuderer and Zeiger).

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to establish a child welfare housing assistance pilot program subject to funds appropriated for that purpose that provides housing vouchers, rental assistance, navigation, and other support services to eligible families beginning July 1, 2020, and ending June 30, 2022.
- A parent with a child who a court has found dependent and lack of appropriate housing is the primary remaining barrier to reunification is eligible for the pilot program.

Hearing Date: 3/22/19

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

If an individual suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, that abuse or neglect can be reported to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Child Protective Services (CPS) office or to law enforcement. There are many individuals who are required by law to report suspected abuse or neglect.

The CPS will then determine whether the report of child abuse or neglect is credible and whether the report meets the sufficiency screening criteria. If the report meets the screening criteria, CPS

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will assign either: (1) a 24-hour response that includes an investigation; or (2) a family assessment response for low- to moderate-risk allegations that requires a 72-hour response.

The DCYF, or anyone else, can file a court petition alleging that the child should be a dependent of the state due to abuse, neglect, or because no parent, guardian, or custodian is capable of adequately caring for the child. A court will hold a shelter care hearing following removal of a child from his or her home within 72 hours. At this hearing, the court will determine if the child can return home safely.

Summary of Bill:

Beginning July 1, 2020, the DCYF must establish a child welfare housing assistance pilot program (CWHAPP) intended to shorten the time that children remain in out-of-home care that provides housing vouchers, rental assistance, navigation, and other support services to eligible families.

A parent with a child who a court has found dependent and lack of appropriate housing is the primary remaining barrier to reunification is eligible for the CWHAPP.

The DCYF must contract with an outside entity or entities to operate the CWHAPP. If no outside entity or entities are available to operate the program or specific parts of the CWHAPP, the DCYF may operate the program or the specific parts that are not operated by an outside entity.

Families may be referred to the CWHAPP by a caseworker, attorney, guardian ad litem, child welfare parent mentor, Office of Public Defense (OPD) social worker, or the court.

The DCYF must convene a stakeholder group to assist the DCYF in design of the CWHAPP. The stakeholder group must include:

- parent allies;
- parent attorneys and social workers managed by the OPD Parent Representation Program;
- the Department of Commerce;
- housing experts;
- community-based organizations;
- advocates; and
- behavioral health providers.

By December 1, 2021, the DCYF must report on outcomes for the CWHAPP to the stakeholder group and the Oversight Board for the DCYF. The report must include racial, geographic, ethnic, and gender distribution of program support.

The CWHAPP is subject to the availability of funds appropriated for that purpose and will expire on June 30, 2022.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 12, 2019.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.