

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5860

As of February 14, 2019

Title: An act relating to kinship care.

Brief Description: Concerning kinship care.

Sponsors: Senators King, Hobbs, Saldaña, Cleveland, Wilson, C., Frockt, Kuderer and Nguyen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation: 2/13/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires unlicensed kinship caregivers caring for children, placed with them by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, to be paid the same rate as licensed foster parents.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, REENTRY & REHABILITATION

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

Background: Kinship care is the full-time care of children by relatives. Kinship care occurs informally, when children are not involved with public child welfare agencies, and formally, when public child welfare agencies are involved in placing children with relatives. The term "kin" is defined as persons eighteen years of age or older to whom the child is related by blood, adoption, or marriage, including marriages that have been dissolved; and who are denoted by the prefix grand or great; full, half, or step siblings; uncles or aunts; nephews or nieces; or first cousins.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is responsible for planning, designing and implementing strategies to prioritize placing children with willing and able kin when out-of-home placement is required.

When children are placed in out-of-home care—kinship care—with a relative, and the relative is not a licensed foster parent, that relative does not receive payment from DCYF to support caring for the child.

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.

Summary of Bill: Unlicensed kinship caregivers caring for children placed with them by DCYF are to be paid at the same rate as licensed foster parents.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 9, 2019.

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

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The best thing we can do with kids in out-of-home care is place them with relatives, but the relatives do not get paid the same as licensed foster parents. It is a simple bill with a large fiscal note—\$31 million. For every child placed with relatives by DCYF there are ten living with relatives informally. This bill really focuses on the smaller group who make up about half the kids in out-of-home placement. There are many reasons why kin may not want to be licensed, most are not. We do not means test foster parents so we should not means test kinship care providers. DCYF is really working on making licensing process more amenable to relatives however the fear factor is a real deterrent for some relatives. Some states provide graduated licensing approaches, with some sort of credential a payment could be made. While there are navigators, that is not enough. Families have to know that navigators exists and the system is confusing as kinship care providers are served by two different agencies; DSHS for unlicensed relatives and DCYF for licensed relatives. The goal is to have one navigator in each of the 9 Areas of Aging Contractors (AAA) regions, but the AAA regions can be pretty large. For children who are in danger of being placed in foster care, every effort should be made to place the child with family and provide follow-up care. Fifteen months of services after reunification once the Families First Act is implemented here in Washington.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Curtis King, Prime Sponsor; Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children; Donna Christensen, Catholic Charities.

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