

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6623

As Amended by House, March 6, 2020

Title: An act relating to reducing funding restrictions for host homes.

Brief Description: Reducing host home funding restrictions.

Sponsors: Senators Darneille, Kuderer, Warnick, Zeiger, Das, Nguyen and Saldaña.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Housing Stability & Affordability: 1/29/20, 2/03/20 [DP-WM, w/oRec].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 2/12/20, 46-0.

Passed House: 3/06/20, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates both the prohibition on an individual host home receiving any public funding and the annual public funding limit for host home programs.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING STABILITY & AFFORDABILITY

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Kuderer, Chair; Das, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Member; Fortunato, Assistant Ranking Member; Darneille and Saldaña.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Warnick.

Staff: Brandon Popovac (786-7465)

Background: Host home programs link families who need temporary care for their children with families who are willing to provide temporary care for those children. Host home programs recruit and screen host families. The children are not in the care or custody of the state. Likewise, host home programs, and host homes, are considered a

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private home and are not licensed by the Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF). This license exemption applies to a host home program, or host home, if it:

- operates as a tax-exempt organization serving youth not in the care of or receiving services from DCYF;
- performs background checks on those over 18 in the host home through the Washington State Patrol or equivalent law enforcement agency and inspects the host home, as part of its recruiting and screening for potential host homes;
- screens and provides case management to youth in the program;
- obtains notarized permission or limited power of attorney from the parent or legal guardian of the youth participating in the host home program with such permission updated every six months for stays longer than six months;
- obtains insurance for the program;
- provides mandatory reporter and confidentiality training; and
- registers with the secretary of state.

Individual host homes may not receive any public funding. Host home programs may not receive over \$100,000 in public funding. If a host home program receives any public funding, that program must report annually to the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs on the:

- number of children in the program served;
- reasons for child placement with a host home; and
- location and status of the child after leaving the host home.

In July 2017, the Department of Commerce produced a report with recommendations and best practices for host home programs to the Governor and Legislature.

Summary of Bill: The prohibition on an individual host home receiving any public funding and the annual public funding limit for host home programs are eliminated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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 host home program is a wonderful tool, particularly for small close-knit communities to help children feel supported. Host homes do not need to be licensed as a foster home facility, and the child does not have to go into foster care. Funding restrictions that were put in place years ago were very objectionable, which included the state government telling local governments and the federal government that they could not support these kinds of programs. The repeal of these funding restrictions will make this portion of our continuum of care and our response to the youth homelessness crisis much more well received in many communities across our state.

Host home programs implement amazing ways to house young people on a very small budget, but the financial restrictions prevent these programs from being offered across the

state or for staff to be paid a decent wage. Host home programs are working, with some achieving 100 percent graduation rates and other youth thriving and not going back into homelessness.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Jeannie Darneille, Prime Sponsor; Lori Cavender, Washington Host Home Coalition.

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

EFFECT OF HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

- Adds a definition of host home program and reorganizes statutory provisions regarding the host home program and host home exemption from DCYF licensure.