

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5566

As Reported by House Committee On:
Housing, Human Services & Veterans

Title: An act relating to expanding eligibility for the independent youth housing program.

Brief Description: Expanding eligibility for the independent youth housing program.

Sponsors: Senators Kuderer, Lovelett, Das, Dhingra, Fortunato, Nguyen, Saldaña and Wilson, C.; by request of Department of Commerce.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Housing, Human Services & Veterans: 2/18/22, 2/22/22 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the eligibility of the Independent Youth Housing Program to include youth who were formerly dependent at any time, who are under the age of 25, and youth receiving Extended Foster Care services.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, HUMAN SERVICES & VETERANS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Peterson, Chair; Taylor, Vice Chair; Bateman, Chopp, Donaghy and Leavitt.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Gilday, Ranking Minority Member; Barkis, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Jacobsen.

Staff: Lena Langer (786-7192).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs.

The Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (OHY) was created in 2015 as an office within the Department of Commerce. The OHY provides services for youth and young adults, including the Independent Youth Housing Program (IYHP), street youth services, HOPE Centers, and crisis residential centers.

Independent Youth Housing Program.

The IYHP was created by the Legislature in 2007. The IYHP provides rental assistance and case management services, through five contracted agencies located throughout the state, to eligible youth who have aged out of the Washington State dependency system. There are two primary goals of the IYHP:

- ensuring that all youth exiting the state dependency system have a decent, appropriate, and affordable home in a healthy, safe environment to prevent youth from experiencing homelessness; and
- reducing the percentage of young people eligible for state assistance upon exiting the state dependency system.

Youth are eligible under the program if they are at least 18 years of age but less than 23 years, were legal dependents of the state within four months of their eighteenth birthday, and are Washington residents. Priority under the IYHP is given to youth who were dependents of the state for at least one year. Youth participating in Extended Foster Care (EFC) are only eligible to receive IYHP services once they exit EFC.

Youth may receive the following services under the IYHP:

- monthly rent;
- utility payments, such as gas and electricity;
- move-in costs, such as first and last month's rent or security deposits;
- costs for credit checks; or
- costs for parking, if not included in rent.

Other IYHP requirements include:

- participation in case management;
- sources of income verification;
- working on independent living goals;
- contributing up to 30 percent of their income to help pay for rent; and
- participation in an Individual Development Account or other savings plan, if income exceeds 50 percent of area median income.

Extended Foster Care.

The EFC program provides an opportunity for youth who were dependents of Washington at age 18 to voluntarily agree to continue receiving foster care services, including placement services, while working on their goals towards independence.

The youth's dependency action will continue if the youth elects to participate in the program

on their eighteenth birthday. Eligible youth who do not elect to participate in the EFC program on their eighteenth birthday have until their twenty-first birthday to voluntarily request to participate in the EFC program. Eligible youth may enter and exit the program as needed between the ages of 18 and 21 years old.

Extended Foster Care services may include:

- foster care placement or supervised independent living setting placement;
- medical, including mental health, and dental services;
- transitional living services, if available;
- case management; or
- referrals to community resources, as appropriate.

Summary of Bill:

Eligibility requirements under the IYHP are expanded to include youth who were formerly dependent at any time before their eighteenth birthday, are under the age of 25, and youth who are also receiving EFC services.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Access to the IYHP is critical for youth in foster care. This bill is important because there are youth who experience foster care that end up in situations where they have nowhere to go and very little support, even in circumstances where they have been adopted. This bill ensures that more youth who have been in foster care will have access to safe and stable housing. Nationally, 50 percent of homeless adults have spent some time foster care. In the state, one in three youth in foster care experience housing instability within a year of aging out of foster care. Young people who experience the trauma of being in foster care deserve the same level of support as young people who come from intact families. The IYHP provides housing stability and is a stepping stone for youth from dependence to independence. Youth enrolled in the IYHP receive individualized case management. Currently, youth have to choose between the IYHP and EFC services. This bill will no longer force youth to choose between the two programs.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Patty Kuderer, prime sponsor; Marissa Ingalls, Coordinated Care of Washington; Emily Stochel, College Success Foundation; Kim Justice, Office of Homeless Youth, Department of Commerce; Jim Theofelis, NorthStar Advocates; Sara Mack, Volunteers of America; and Julie Patino, A Way Home Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.