

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5566

As of January 10, 2022

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 and Lovelett; by request of Department of Commerce.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Housing & Local Government: 1/11/22.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands eligibility under the Independent Youth Housing Program to include formerly dependent youth up to age 25 and youth receiving extended foster care services.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Staff: Brandon Popovac

Background: Office of Homeless Youth. In 2015, the Legislature created the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (OHY) within the Department of Commerce. OHY provides services for youth and young adults, including through the Independent Youth Housing Program (IYHP), street youth services, HOPE Centers, and crisis residential centers.

Independent Youth Housing Program. Created by the Legislature in 2007, 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 foster care system. IYHP goals are to ensure 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 to reduce the percentage of young people eligible for

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state assistance upon exiting the state dependency system.

Foster youth are eligible under the program if they are 18 years of age or older, were a dependent of the state within four months of their 18th birthday, have not yet reached the age of 23, and are a Washington resident. Priority under IYHP is given to youth who were dependents of the state for at least one year. Youth participating in extended foster care are only eligible to receive IYHP services once they exit extended foster care.

Youth may receive the following services under 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 extended foster care (EFC) program provides an opportunity for youth who were a dependent of Washington State 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 they elect to participate in the program on their 18th birthday. Eligible youth who do not elect to participate in the EFC program on their 18th birthday will have until their 21st 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.

EFC 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 IYHP are expanded to include youth who were formerly dependent at any time before their 25th birthday and youth who are currently receiving extended foster care services.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 4, 2022.

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

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