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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5256**

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**State of Washington**

**68th Legislature**

**2023 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Human Services (originally sponsored by Senators Saldaña, C. Wilson, Frame, Hasegawa, Hunt, Kuderer, Lovelett, Lovick, Nguyen, Nobles, Robinson, Valdez, and Wellman; by request of Department of Children, Youth, and Families)

READ FIRST TIME 02/01/23.

1 AN ACT Relating to making permanent and expanding the child  
2 welfare housing assistance program; amending RCW 74.13.802; providing  
3 an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 74.13.802 and 2022 c 297 s 965 are each amended to  
6 read as follows:

7 (1) (~~Beginning July 1, 2020~~) Within funds appropriated for this  
8 specific purpose, the department shall (~~establish~~) administer a  
9 child welfare housing assistance (~~pilot~~) program, which provides  
10 housing vouchers, rental assistance, navigation, and other support  
11 services to eligible families.

12 (a) The department shall operate or contract for the operation of  
13 the child welfare housing assistance (~~pilot~~) program under  
14 subsection (3) of this section in one (~~county~~) or more counties  
15 west of the crest of the Cascade mountain range and one (~~county~~) or  
16 more counties east of the crest of the Cascade mountain range.

17 (b) The child welfare housing assistance (~~pilot~~) program is  
18 intended to reduce the need for foster care placement and to shorten  
19 the time that children remain in out-of-home care when placement is  
20 necessary.

1           (2) (~~A parent with a child who is dependent pursuant to chapter~~  
2 ~~13.34 RCW and whose primary remaining barrier to reunification is the~~  
3 ~~lack of appropriate housing is eligible for the child welfare housing~~  
4 ~~assistance pilot program.)) The following families are eligible for  
5 assistance from the child welfare housing assistance program:~~

6           (a) A parent with a child who is dependent pursuant to chapter  
7 13.34 RCW and a lack of appropriate housing is a remaining barrier to  
8 reunification; and

9           (b) A parent of a child who is a candidate for foster care as  
10 defined in RCW 26.44.020 and whose housing instability is a barrier  
11 to the child remaining in the home.

12           (3) The department shall contract with an outside entity or  
13 entities, who must have a demonstrated understanding of the  
14 importance of stable housing for children and families involved or at  
15 risk of being involved with the child welfare system, to operate the  
16 child welfare housing assistance (~~pilot~~) program. If no outside  
17 entity or entities are available to operate the program or specific  
18 parts of the program, the department may operate the program or the  
19 specific parts that are not operated by an outside entity.

20           (4) Families may be referred to the child welfare housing  
21 assistance (~~pilot~~) program by a department caseworker, an attorney,  
22 a guardian ad litem as defined in chapter 13.34 RCW, a parent ally as  
23 defined in RCW 2.70.060, an office of public defense social worker,  
24 or the court.

25           (5) The department shall consult with a stakeholder group that  
26 must include, but is not limited to, the following:

27           (a) Parent allies;

28           (b) Parent attorneys and social workers managed by the office of  
29 public defense parent representation program;

30           (c) The department of commerce;

31           (d) Housing experts;

32           (e) Community-based organizations;

33           (f) Advocates; and

34           (g) Behavioral health providers.

35           (6) The stakeholder group established in subsection (5) of this  
36 section shall begin meeting after July 28, 2019, and assist the  
37 department in design of the child welfare housing assistance  
38 (~~pilot~~) program in areas including, but not limited to:

39           (a) Equitable racial, geographic, ethnic, and gender distribution  
40 of program support;

1 (b) Eligibility criteria;  
2 (c) Creating a definition of homeless for purposes of eligibility  
3 for the program; and  
4 (d) Options for program design that include outside entities  
5 operating the entire program or specific parts of the program.  
6 (7) (~~By December 1, 2021~~) Beginning November 1, 2024, the  
7 department shall annually report data and outcomes for the child  
8 welfare housing assistance (~~(pilot)~~) program to the (~~oversight board~~  
9 ~~for children, youth, and families established pursuant to RCW~~  
10 ~~43.216.015~~) legislature. (~~The~~) At a minimum, when available, the  
11 report must include (~~(racial, geographic, ethnic, and gender~~  
12 ~~distribution of program support)~~) the following information:  
13 (a) Distribution of the child welfare housing assistance program  
14 by race, geography, ethnicity, and gender including a discussion of  
15 whether this distribution was equitable; and  
16 (b) Any recommendations for legislative changes to the child  
17 welfare housing assistance program.  
18 (~~(8) The child welfare housing assistance pilot program~~  
19 ~~established in this section is subject to the availability of funds~~  
20 ~~appropriated for this purpose.~~  
21 ~~(9) This section expires June 30, 2023.~~)

22 NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. This act is necessary for the immediate  
23 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of  
24 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes  
25 effect June 30, 2023.

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