
SENATE BILL 5256

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

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 01/11/23. Referred to Committee on Human Services.

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, and biennially thereafter, the
7 department shall report outcomes for the child welfare housing
8 assistance (~~((pilot))~~) program to the (~~((oversight board for children,~~
9 ~~youth, and families established pursuant to RCW 43.216.015))~~) governor
10 and the appropriate committees of the legislature. The report must
11 include racial, geographic, ethnic, and gender distribution of
12 program support.

13 ~~((8) The child welfare housing assistance pilot program~~
14 ~~established in this section is subject to the availability of funds~~
15 ~~appropriated for this purpose.~~

16 ~~(9) This section expires June 30, 2023.)~~

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** This act is necessary for the immediate
18 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of
19 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes
20 effect June 30, 2023.

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