

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5508

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As of February 4, 2025

**Title:** An act relating to the child welfare housing assistance program.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the child welfare housing assistance program.

**Sponsors:** Senators Krishnadasan, Saldaña, Alvarado, Hasegawa, Lovelett, Nobles, Salomon, Trudeau, Valdez and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services: 2/05/25.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DYCF), or entities contracted with DCYF to operate the Child Welfare Housing Assistance Program (Program), to provide housing assistance through the Program after DCYF is no longer providing child welfare or child protective services to the family.
- Directs DCYF to increase the number of households served by the Program by at least 200 above those served during fiscal year 2025, with a priority on serving families on any wait lists.
- Provides that beginning July 1, 2027, DCYF shall continue to provide child welfare housing assistance to at least the same number of households as were served during the 2025-2027 biennium.
- Adds additional reporting requirements to DCYF's annual report the Legislature.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

**Staff:** Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

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*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.*

**Background:** Child Welfare Housing Assistance Program. The purpose of the Child Welfare Housing Assistance Program (Program) is to reduce the need for foster care placement and to shorten the time children remain in out-of-home care when placement is necessary by provide housing vouchers, rental assistance, navigation, and other support services to eligible families. DCYF administers the Program, in one or more counties in Eastern and Western Washington, within funds appropriated for this specific purpose. The Program was initially created as a pilot program in 2019 and made permanent in 2023.

Eligibility. The following families are eligible for assistance from the Program:

- a parent with a child who is dependent and a lack of appropriate housing is a remaining barrier to reunification; and
- a parent of a child who is a candidate for foster care and whose housing instability is a barrier to the child remaining in the home.

DCYF contracts with an outside entity or entities who must have a demonstrated understanding of the importance of stable housing for children and families involved, or at risk of being involved, with the child welfare system, to operate the Program.

Annually beginning November 1, 2024, DCYF shall report to the Legislature, at a minimum, when available, the distribution of the Program by race, geography, ethnicity, and gender including a discussion of whether of this distribution is equitable and include any recommendations for legislative changes to the Program.

In Chapter 13.34 RCW, housing assistance means appropriate referrals by DCYF or other agencies to federal, state, local, or private agencies or organizations, assistance with forms, applications, or financial subsidies or other monetary assistance for housing. For purposes of Chapter 13.34 RCW, housing assistance is not a remedial service or family reunification service.

**Summary of Bill:** DCYF, or entities contracted with DCYF to operate the Program, may continue to provide housing assistance through the Program after DCYF is no longer providing child welfare or child protective services to the family. DCYF is to adopt rules to establish formal procedures for implementation of the Program.

During the 2025-2027 biennium, DCYF shall increase the number of households served by the Program by at least 200 above those served during fiscal year 2025, with a priority on serving families on any wait lists. Beginning July 1, 2027, DCYF shall continue to provide child welfare housing assistance to at least the same number of households as were served during the 2025-2027 biennium.

DCYF's annual report to the Legislature is to include the following additional information:

- the number of unhoused parents on the waiting list for vouchers supported by the Program and the average time spent on the waiting list;
- the percentage of funding spent on housing assistance for families to prevent out-of-

- home placement, support reunification, provide for program administration, or other purposes; and
- the percentage of funding spent on program administration, rental assistance to families, and supportive services necessary to receive federal housing voucher support.

The definition of housing assistance under Chapter 13.34 RCW is amended to include the Child Welfare Housing Assistance Program.

**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.