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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5508**

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**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Human Services (originally sponsored by Senators Krishnadasan, Saldaña, Alvarado, Hasegawa, Lovelett, Nobles, Salomon, Trudeau, Valdez, and C. Wilson)

READ FIRST TIME 02/13/25.

1 AN ACT Relating to the child welfare housing assistance program;  
2 and amending RCW 74.13.802.

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

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 74.13.802 and 2023 c 321 s 1 are each amended to  
5 read as follows:

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

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

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

18 (c) The department or entities contracted with the department  
19 under this section may continue to provide housing assistance through  
20 the child welfare housing assistance program after the department is

1 no longer providing child welfare or child protective services to the  
2 family.

3 (d) The department shall adopt rules to establish formal  
4 procedures for implementation of the child welfare housing assistance  
5 program.

6 (2) The following families are eligible for assistance from the  
7 child welfare housing assistance program:

8 (a) A parent with a child who is dependent pursuant to chapter  
9 13.34 RCW and a lack of appropriate housing is a remaining barrier to  
10 reunification; and

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

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

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

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

29 (a) Parent allies;

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

32 (c) The department of commerce;

33 (d) Housing experts;

34 (e) Community-based organizations;

35 (f) Advocates; and

36 (g) Behavioral health providers.

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

1 (a) Equitable racial, geographic, ethnic, and gender distribution  
2 of program support;

3 (b) Eligibility criteria;

4 (c) Creating a definition of homeless for purposes of eligibility  
5 for the program; and

6 (d) Options for program design that include outside entities  
7 operating the entire program or specific parts of the program.

8 (7) Beginning November 1, 2024, the department shall annually  
9 report data and outcomes for the child welfare housing assistance  
10 program to the legislature. At a minimum, when available, the report  
11 must include the following information:

12 (a) Distribution of the child welfare housing assistance program  
13 by race, geography, ethnicity, and gender including a discussion of  
14 whether this distribution was equitable; (~~and~~)

15 (b) Any recommendations for legislative changes to the child  
16 welfare housing assistance program;

17 (c) The number of unhoused parents on the waiting list for  
18 vouchers supported by the child welfare housing assistance program  
19 and the average time spent on the waiting list;

20 (d) The percentage of funding spent on housing assistance for  
21 families to prevent out-of-home placement, support reunification,  
22 provide for program administration, or other purposes; and

23 (e) The percentage of funding spent on program administration,  
24 rental assistance to families, and supportive services necessary to  
25 receive federal housing voucher support.

26 (8) The child welfare housing assistance program established in  
27 this section is subject to the availability of funds appropriated for  
28 this purpose.

29 (9) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this  
30 specific purpose, the department shall serve families eligible for  
31 the child welfare housing assistance program who are placed on a  
32 waiting list of any kind in an attempt to serve all families eligible  
33 for the child welfare housing assistance program and eliminate any  
34 waiting lists.

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