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## Housing Committee

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# HB 1922

**Brief Description:** Creating an independent youth housing program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Pedersen, Pettigrew, Miloscia, McIntire, Walsh, Kagi, Appleton, Kenney, Hasegawa and Ormsby.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Independent Youth Housing Program within the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (DCTED) to provide housing stipends and case management services to young adults ages 18 - 23 who were once dependents of the state.

**Hearing Date:** 2/7/07

**Staff:** Robyn Dupuis (786-7166).

### Background:

There are currently approximately 400 youth who exit ("age-out") of foster care at age 18 each year in Washington. According to the "Foster Youth Transition to Independence Study" conducted by the Office of Children's Administrative Research (2004), within one year of exiting foster care, approximately:

- Thirteen percent had experienced homelessness. (Another study, the "Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study" in 2005 documented that 22.2 percent of post-foster youth experienced homelessness.)
- Fifty percent had completed high school or obtained their GED.
- Less than 50 percent were employed and of those who were employed, 47 percent were making wages at or below the poverty line.
- Thirty percent were enrolled in at least one public assistance program.

The January 2006 state point-in-time count of homeless persons, coordinated by the DCTED, counted 466 homeless youth age less than 18 unaccompanied by an adult guardian. The Emergency Shelter Assistance Program (ESAP) data shows that 1,131 homeless youth younger than 18 and unaccompanied by an adult guardian were provided shelter in fiscal year 2006. The

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ESAP data accounts for 2,495 youth ages 18-21 who were provided shelter in fiscal year 2006. There is anecdotal evidence that many homeless youth have been involved in the foster care system at some point in their lives.

### **Current Services to Former Foster Youth**

**Extended Foster Care via SSHB 2002 (2006 Legislative Session):** Each year, through 2008, 50 youth reaching the age of 18 will be eligible to remain in foster care homes (until age 21) if they are enrolled in higher education or vocational programs.

**The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)** uses federal monies (Chafee funds) to serve some youth who have left foster care (ages 18 through 21) through the Transitional Living program. Youth may receive case management and access to some funding assistance for housing, employment and training, mental health services, education and other services. The subcontracting agencies of the DSHS decide on a case-by-case basis what services are most needed by the individual youth. Thirty percent of the Transitional Living funds may be used for housing purposes (with a total limit of \$1,500 for housing per youth). The DSHS serves approximately 400 youth through the Transitional Living program, which represents approximately one-third of youth who would likely be eligible for the services.

**The DCTED** assists small and medium counties access federal "McKinney-Vento" dollars which can be used for project-based rental vouchers and case management for homeless youth or youth at risk of homelessness. Currently, two organizations (Northwest Youth Services and Community Youth Services) provide such vouchers for youth and together they serve about 25 young people each year at a cost between \$10,000 - \$15,000 per youth.

Through the Homeless Grant Assistance Program (HGAP), the DCTED has awarded Snohomish County a grant to provide housing vouchers to 15 youth exiting foster care. The HGAP is funded with "2163" Homeless Surcharge funds. A focus of the HGAP in the future will be funding programs that address discharge and re-entry issues.

**The Interagency Council on Homelessness** has placed a priority focus on addressing issues at a state level related to discharge and re-entry planning. This would include issues related to youth exiting the foster care system.

### **Summary of Bill:**

The Independent Youth Housing Program is created within the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (DCTED) for the purpose of providing housing stipends and case management services to youth, ages 18 - 23, who have exited the state dependency system. The DCTED is directed to serve as many youth as possible given available funding.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) will collaborate with the DCTED to provide information about the program to dependent youth and to refer dependent youth nearing the age of 18 to the program.

### **Eligible Youth**

- Youth who were dependents of the state and are ages 18 - 23

- Youth whose income does not exceed 50% area median income unless they agree to participate in a matched savings for asset accumulation program (such as an Individual Development Account program)
- Youth who agree to pay portion of rent in a timely manner

### **Program Administration**

The DCTED may contract with organizations to distribute housing stipends and provide housing related services to youth. Services will include the development of an independent living plan, case management, information and referral services and education on tenant rights and responsibilities.

### **Housing Stipend Details**

- The DCTED will establish a formula to determine amount of the stipends. Stipends will be based on factors including age, fair market rent for area and other housing and living situation variables.
- Stipends must be used for "independent" housing which cannot include accommodations with or in premises owned by former foster parents or biological parents.
- Stipends are payable to landlords or other housing management.

### **Program Funding**

- \$2 million appropriation from the Housing Trust Fund for the 2007 - 2009 biennium to be used for housing stipends; and
- \$500,000 appropriation for the 2007 - 2009 biennium from General Fund for other program operating costs.

### **Evaluation and Reporting Requirements**

- The DCTED will report annually to the legislature using performance measures.
- The Washington State Institute for Public Policy will measure the outcomes for youth participating in the program and issue a final report by December, 2010.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.