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**SENATE BILL 5105**

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**State of Washington 65th Legislature 2017 Regular Session**

**By** Senators O'Ban and Wilson

AN ACT Relating to streamlining foster care licensing; reenacting and amending RCW 74.15.100; and adding new sections to chapter 74.15 RCW.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 74.15 RCW to read as follows:

The legislature finds and declares that the recruitment and retention of foster care families has become a crisis that negatively impacts children in dire need of suitable foster care placements. In order to address this crisis, the state seeks to improve its ability to recruit and retain foster families. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to streamline the foster care licensing process without compromising the safeguards in place to ensure that children in foster care are placed with qualified families.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 74.15 RCW to read as follows:

In order to streamline the foster care application process for child-placing agencies, when processing a child-placing agency application the department shall:

(1) Accept scanned foster care parent applications that include an original signature electronically;

(2) Complete and return background authorization forms within thirty days, including weekends and holidays, or provide explanation to either the prospective parent, the child-placing agency, or both about why there is a delay;

(3) Ensure that the forms required across the state are uniform and consistent between regions;

(4) If related department forms change after the foster care application has been received by the department, not require the applicant to resubmit information on a substantially similar form;

(5) Ensure that foster care parent applications are processed in a timely manner. If the application process is not complete within ninety days of the department's receipt of the application and background clearance, and the delay is not based on missing or incomplete information from the applicant, the department shall extend the application process an additional thirty days and provide an explanation to either the prospective parent, the child-placing agency, or both about why there is a delay;

(6) Email the fingerprint original case agency number to a child-placing agency within five business days of receipt of the fingerprint-based background notice from the family or child-placing agency, in order to expedite a child-placing agency's ability to arrange for fingerprint appointments for foster parents and potential foster parents.

**Sec.**  RCW 74.15.100 and 2009 c 520 s 16 and 2009 c 206 s 1 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

Each agency or supervising agency shall make application for a license or renewal of license to the department on forms prescribed by the department. A licensed agency having foster-family homes under its supervision may make application for a license on behalf of any such foster-family home. Such a foster home license shall cease to be valid when the home is no longer under the supervision of that agency. Upon receipt of such application, the department shall either grant or deny a license within ninety days unless the application is for licensure as a foster-family home, in which case RCW 74.15.040 and section 2 of this act shall govern. A license shall be granted if the agency meets the minimum requirements set forth in chapter 74.15 RCW and RCW 74.13.031 and the departmental requirements consistent herewith, except that an initial license may be issued as provided in RCW 74.15.120. Licenses provided for in chapter 74.15 RCW and RCW 74.13.031 shall be issued for a period of three years. The licensee, however, shall advise the secretary of any material change in circumstances which might constitute grounds for reclassification of license as to category. The license issued under this chapter is not transferable and applies only to the licensee. The license shall be limited to a particular location which shall be stated on the license. For licensed foster-family homes having an acceptable history of child care, the license may remain in effect for thirty days after a move, except that this will apply only if the family remains intact. Licensees must notify their licensor before moving to a new location and may request a continuation of the license at the new location. At the request of the licensee, the department shall, within thirty days following a foster-family home licensee's move to a new location, amend the license to reflect the new location, provided the new location and the licensee meet minimum licensing standards.

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