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**SECOND SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5718**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Saldaña, Hasegawa, Nguyen, O'Ban, Das, Keiser, Kuderer, and Zeiger)

AN ACT Relating to establishing the child welfare housing assistance program that provides housing assistance to parents reunifying with a child and parents at risk of having a child removed; adding a new section to chapter 74.13 RCW; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 74.13 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Beginning July 1, 2020, the department shall establish a child welfare housing assistance pilot program, which provides housing vouchers, rental assistance, navigation, and other support services to eligible families. The child welfare housing assistance pilot program is intended to shorten the time that children remain in out-of-home care.

(2) A parent with a child who is dependent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW and whose primary remaining barrier to reunification is the lack of appropriate housing is eligible for the child welfare housing assistance pilot program.

(3) The department shall contract with an outside entity or entities to operate the child welfare housing assistance pilot program. If no outside entity or entities are available to operate the program or specific parts of the program, the department may operate the program or the specific parts that are not operated by an outside entity.

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

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

(a) Parent allies;

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

(c) The department of commerce;

(d) Housing experts;

(e) Community-based organizations;

(f) Advocates; and

(g) Behavioral health providers.

(6) The stakeholder group established in subsection (5) of this section shall begin meeting after the effective date of this section and assist the department in design of the child welfare housing assistance pilot program in areas including, but not limited to:

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

(b) Eligibility criteria;

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

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

(7) By December 1, 2021, the department shall report outcomes for the child welfare housing assistance pilot program to the oversight board for children, youth, and families established pursuant to RCW 43.216.015. The report must include racial, geographic, ethnic, and gender distribution of program support.

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

(9) This section expires June 30, 2022.

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