

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1259

As Reported by House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to providing services for persons through twenty years of age, who are or who have been in foster care.

Brief Description: Providing services for persons twenty years of age who are or who have been in foster care.

Sponsors: Representatives Tokuda, Boldt, Kagi, Schual-Berke, Kenney, Lambert and Edwards.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 1/29/01, 2/8/01 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Medicaid coverage is extended to young people between the ages of 18 and 21 who were in foster care on their 18th birthday.
- Young people up to age 21 who have been in foster care are made eligible for the array of independent living services created by federal law.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Boldt, Republican Co-Chair; Tokuda, Democratic Co-Chair; Kagi, Democratic Vice Chair; Morell, Republican Vice Chair; Ballasiotes, Campbell, Darneille, Dickerson, Miloscia and Pflug.

Staff: Deborah Frazier (786-7152).

Background:

The federal Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106 -169) allows states to extend Medicaid coverage to young people between the ages of 18 and 21 who were in foster care on their 18th birthday. The act also allows states to provide independent living services, including room and board, to young people up to age 21 who become age

18 while in foster care, or are likely to remain in foster care until age 18". The Act provides \$140 million nationwide, which is double the amount previously allocated.

Independent living services are designed to assist young people as they transition to adulthood. Services currently may include: assistance with obtaining a high school diploma; vocational training; daily living skills training; and counseling. Approximately 100 youth up to age 21 are provided independent living services each month by the Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

Summary of Bill:

Medicaid coverage is extended to young people between the ages of 18 and 21 who were in foster care on their 18th birthday.

Young people up to age 21 who have been in foster care are made eligible for the array of independent living services created by the federal Foster Care Independence Act of 1999.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Youth don't have medical benefits when they leave foster care at age 18, and end up feeling abandoned all over again. We don't have parents to fall back on, and it is difficult to get a job with medical benefits when you're only 18. At our clinic we see examples of youth who develop big health problems that started as small issues, but weren't treated. We also see young people with mental health needs that go untreated because of the lack of insurance. When we had a gathering of former foster care youth and asked them to talk about their needs, health care was foremost.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Tokuda, prime sponsor; Shantalle Graham, former foster child; Eric Kenezuroff, foster youth; Heidi Wasch, 45th Street Clinic; Paul Barry, Children's Alliance; Kate Grossman, Youthcare; Janis Avery, Treehouse; Rick Williams, Kitsap Foster Care Association; Marianna Conner, Washington Department of Social and Health Services; and James Wilson, Medical Assistance Administration.