

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 1079

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, March 24, 2005

**Title:** An act relating to postsecondary education and training support for former foster youth.

**Brief Description:** Regarding postsecondary education and training support for foster youth.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Kenney, Chase, Dickerson and Schual-Berke; by request of Governor Locke).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/10/05, 95-0.

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 3/23/05, 3/24/05 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Mulliken, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

**Staff:** Brian Jeffries (786-7422)

**Background:** The Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) administers child welfare and licensing services, including responsibility for youth in foster care. Youth in foster care can receive Independent Living Services (ILS) to help prepare them for independence. For youth emancipating from foster care, ILS programs provide assistance in education, training, housing, and employment. Youth who are determined to be most likely to remain in foster care until age 18 are eligible for independent living programs. Young adults ages 18 through 21 that have been emancipated from foster care are eligible to receive assistance with housing, education, and employment training. According to the Children's Administration Performance Report 2003, 470 youth aged out of foster care in the 2002 calendar year. Of these youth, 161 reported that they planned to attend higher education.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) administers the state financial aid programs for higher education. The state need grant and the state work-study program are two of the state financial aid programs. The Legislature appropriated \$236,529,000 in state needs grants in the 2003-05 biennium with an estimated 53,500 students served annually. An estimated 7,700 students annually received \$34,096,000 in state work-study appropriated in the 2003-05 biennial budget.

In 2003, legislation was enacted creating an oversight committee composed of staff from the Children's Administration, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and advocacy agencies to develop strategies for maintaining foster children in the schools they

were attending at the time they entered foster care. The committee also promotes best practices in education of foster care youth.

**Summary of Bill:** The membership of the Children's Administration oversight committee on education of foster youth is expanded to include staff from the Higher Education Coordinating Board, foster youth, former foster youth, and foster parents. The scope of responsibilities of the committee is expanded to include promotion of opportunities for foster youth to participate in postsecondary education or training.

The committee will: assess statewide access capacity for postsecondary education or training opportunities for current and former foster youth; identify funding sources available in the state for services to former foster youth to pursue and participate in postsecondary education or training opportunities; review the effectiveness of activities in the state to support former foster youth to pursue and participate in postsecondary education or training opportunities; identify new activities, or existing activities that should be modified or expanded, to best meet statewide needs; and review on an ongoing basis the progress toward improving educational and vocational outcomes for foster youth.

The HECB, when making annual awards of state need grants, will give special consideration to foster youth. Eligible former foster youth are guaranteed a state need grant from state needs grants that were previously awarded and declined, forfeited, or otherwise unused. For purposes of awarding state need grants, a "former foster youth" is defined as a person who is at least 18 years of age, but not more than 24 years of age, who was a dependent of DSHS at the time the youth attained the age of 18. In addition to special consideration for state need grants, the HECB must give job placement priority to eligible former foster youth participating in the state work-study program.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Testimony For:** Study after study has shown that former foster youth are underrepresented in postsecondary education. Overall, foster care youth are not successful in school and do not, generally, transition to postsecondary education and training. These students need a great deal of support to be successful in school and college. They also need the hope to attend college. Unfortunately, too many of these youth do not have the financial resources to make college a reality. These youth need access to financial aid. The Governor's office supports the definition of foster youth for the purposes of this bill that defines them as a student who is a 16-39 year old resident of state who is financially needy, has been placed in foster care for at least six months since they turned eighteen, are attending or are planning to attend within six months of earning a diploma or GED certificate, is not pursuing a degree in theology, and is making satisfactory progress towards the completion of a degree or certificate program.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Representative Ruth Kagi, prime sponsor; Becki Collins, HECB; Nani Jackins Park; SBCTC; Kari Burrell, Governor's Policy Office; Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society.