S-4117.1

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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5824**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2022 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation (originally sponsored by Senators Nobles, Mullet, Carlyle, Conway, Frockt, Hasegawa, Keiser, Lovelett, Nguyen, Rivers, Robinson, Stanford, Trudeau, Wagoner, and C. Wilson)

AN ACT Relating to providing dependent youth with financial education and support; adding a new section to chapter 74.13 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that many youth exiting foster care have not been financially prepared for a successful transition to independence. The legislature finds that financial awareness can play a key role in ensuring safe and stable housing and long-term economic well-being. The legislature recognizes that through passage of Substitute Senate Bill No. 6560 in 2018, the legislature established the goal of discharging all youth from state care into safe and stable housing. Therefore, the legislature resolves to create a program to aid young people in foster care with establishing private self-controlled banking accounts to promote successful transition from foster care into independence.

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

(1) The department shall develop a program to provide eligible youth with the ability to establish a private self-controlled bank account with a financial institution.

(a) Caseworkers shall provide an eligible youth with the opportunity to open a private self-controlled bank account with a financial institution. If interested, the eligible youth may open the account with assistance from any supportive adult, including but not limited to: Independent living service providers, caregivers, caseworkers, kinship and other family members, attorneys, and supportive adults in the community which may include mentors, teachers, and coaches. It is the department's responsibility to ensure that every eligible youth receives information about this program beginning at age 14, and to determine whether a youth has established a private self-controlled bank account at the youth's shared planning meeting that is used to develop a transition plan, as provided for in this chapter. If it is determined that an eligible youth has not established a private self-controlled bank account at the time of the shared planning meeting, information on opening a bank account with a financial institution must be included in a youth's transition plan.

(b) The department shall deposit a minimum of $25 per month into an eligible youth's bank account as established under this program. Eligible youth may opt out of receiving minimum deposits under this section at any time. It is the department's responsibility to inform the eligible youth about the impact that deposits could have on public benefit eligibility.

(c) The program is to be fully operational by January 1, 2023.

(d) The department shall conduct an annual electronic survey of 15 percent of eligible youth as a method of program evaluation.

(e) An eligible youth is a dependent youth ages 14 and up, including youth in extended foster care, and remains eligible to open a bank account with the financial support of the department until the dependency proceeding is dismissed.

(2)(a) The department shall convene a group of stakeholders to develop the implementation plan of this program and to ensure statewide access to high quality, developmentally, and culturally appropriate financial education to dependent youth ages 12 and up. The stakeholders shall develop a survey for eligible youth to help determine the effectiveness of the program, including whether the eligible youth has established a self-controlled bank account. The department is encouraged to utilize existing resources readily available including those provided by the department of financial institutions, among other agencies and programs. Stakeholders shall include, but are not limited to: Current or former foster youth, current or former caregivers, including kinship caregivers, the financial education public-private partnership, financial institutions, and those with expertise in providing financial education or mentorship to youth ages 12 and up.

(b) By December 1, 2022, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the department shall submit a report on the work of the stakeholder group as well as the status of the program implementation to the appropriate committees of the legislature and the governor. By December 1, 2023, and annually thereafter, the department shall submit a report summarizing the results of the survey as provided for in subsection (1) of this section to the appropriate committees of the legislature.

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