

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5184

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As Passed Senate, February 3, 2021

**Title:** An act relating to establishing a building point of contact in all K-12 public schools for students in foster care.

**Brief Description:** Establishing a building point of contact in all K-12 public schools for students in foster care.

**Sponsors:** Senators Nobles, Wellman, Billig, Carlyle, Conway, Das, Dhingra, Frockt, Hasegawa, Hunt, Kuderer, Liias, Lovelett, Nguyen, Randall, Saldaña, Salomon and Wilson, C.; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/22/21, 1/27/21 [DP].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed Senate: 2/3/21, 49-0.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires each K-12 public school to establish a contact in each elementary, middle, and high school building to coordinate services and resources for students in foster care.
- Directs existing school district foster care liaisons to train the contact.
- Tasks the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction with providing best practices for choosing and training contacts.

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

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair, K-12; Wilson, C., Vice Chair, Early Learning; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Dozier, Hunt, McCune, Mullet and Pedersen.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Staff:** Ailey Kato (786-7434)

**Background:** State law requires each school district to designate a foster care liaison to facilitate district compliance with state and federal laws related to students in out-of-home care.

District foster care liaisons must collaborate with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to address educational barriers for these students. The liaisons have certain responsibilities including coordinating with different entities, attending and providing training, and facilitating certain processes and procedures.

"Out-of-home care" means placement in a licensed foster family home or group care facility or placement in a home, other than that of the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian, not required to be licensed.

"Dependent child" means any child who:

- has been abandoned;
- is abused or neglected by a person legally responsible for the care of the child;
- has no parent, guardian, or custodian capable of adequately caring for the child, such that the child is in circumstances which constitute a danger of substantial damage to the child's psychological or physical development; or
- is receiving extended foster care services.

State law requires each K-12 public school to establish a building of contact in each elementary, middle, and high school to identify homeless and unaccompanied homeless youth and connecting them with the school district's homeless education liaison.

**Summary of Bill:** Each K-12 public school must establish a contact in each elementary, middle, and high school building for students in foster care. These contacts must be appointed by the principal, in consultation with the district foster care liaison, and are responsible for coordinating services and resources for students in foster care.

The district foster care liaison is responsible for training contacts.

OSPI must make available best practices for choosing and training contacts.

References to students in out-of-home care are changed to students who are dependent.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Students in foster care are some of the most at risk students including higher risk of poverty, homelessness, incarceration, early parenthood, and substance abuse. COVID-19 has deepened these inequities. Caring points of contact in school buildings can help students in foster care not fall victim to these risks because they can help meet students' needs such as transportation and supplies. This support can help students in foster care succeed in school and life and will help make sure they do not fall through the cracks. School district foster care liaisons often work out of a district office and have a number of responsibilities including partnering with community organizations. This bill would require points of contact at each school and require these contacts to have training that will help them meet students' needs. The bill does not require hiring additional staff, and school counselors can fill this role.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator T'wina Nobles, Prime Sponsor; Peggy Carlson, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Katara Jordan, Building Changes; Jarel Sanders, citizen; Alesia Jessie, Seattle Public Schools; Dawn Rains, Treehouse; Samuel Martin, The Mockingbird Society; Allison Krutsinger, Department of Children, Youth and Families.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.