
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5591

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By Senate Human Services (originally sponsored by Senators Nobles, Mullet, Frame, Kuderer, Lovelett, Nguyen, Randall, Trudeau, Valdez, and C. Wilson)

READ FIRST TIME 02/15/23.

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

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that many youth
6 exiting foster care have not been financially prepared for a
7 successful transition to independence. The legislature finds that
8 financial awareness can play a key role in ensuring safe and stable
9 housing and long-term economic well-being. The legislature recognizes
10 that through passage of Substitute Senate Bill No. 6560 in 2018, the
11 legislature established the goal of discharging all youth from state
12 care into safe and stable housing. Therefore, the legislature
13 resolves to create a program to aid young people in foster care with
14 establishing private self-controlled accounts to promote successful
15 transition from foster care into independence.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 74.13
17 RCW to read as follows:

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

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

18 (b) As appropriate, the department shall engage various partners
19 to work with young people to establish their accounts, including but
20 not limited to independent living providers, established community-
21 based organizations, foster parents and caregivers, foster care in-
22 school support staff, and other direct service department staff.

23 (c) The department shall deposit a minimum of \$25 per month into
24 an eligible youth's account as established under this program. The
25 department shall make a first deposit within one month of the youth's
26 opening of an account. Eligible youth may opt out of receiving
27 minimum deposits under this section at any time. It is the
28 department's responsibility to inform the eligible youth about the
29 impact that deposits could have on public benefit eligibility.

30 (d) The department shall create an online platform to allow youth
31 to establish their financial accounts.

32 (e) The program is to be operational by January 1, 2024, and
33 fully implemented in all regions by July 1, 2027. The program shall
34 be established and made fully operational statewide in phases over
35 the state fiscal years as follows:

- 36 (i) Over the 2023-2024 fiscal year, Spokane and Pierce counties;
37 (ii) Over the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the remaining counties in
38 the department's regions 1 and 5;
39 (iii) Over the 2025-2026 fiscal year, regions 2 and 6; and
40 (iv) Over the 2026-2027 fiscal year, regions 3 and 4.

1 (f) The department shall conduct an annual electronic survey of
2 15 percent of eligible youth as a method of program evaluation.

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

7 (2)(a) The department shall convene a temporary advisory
8 committee to advise on the development of the implementation plan of
9 this program, collections and reports of data, expansion of
10 partnerships with financial institutions and service providers, and
11 review of communications and marketing materials. The department
12 shall consult the temporary advisory committee regarding the
13 financial education program to ensure statewide access to a high
14 quality, developmentally, and culturally appropriate program for
15 dependent youth ages 12 and up. The temporary advisory committee
16 shall develop a survey for eligible youth to help determine the
17 effectiveness of the program, including whether the eligible youth
18 has established a self-controlled account. The department is
19 encouraged to utilize existing resources readily available including
20 those provided by the department of financial institutions, among
21 other agencies and programs. Members of the temporary advisory
22 committee shall include, but are not limited to: Current or former
23 foster youth, current or former caregivers, including kinship
24 caregivers, the financial education public-private partnership,
25 financial institutions, and those with expertise in providing
26 financial education or mentorship to youth ages 12 and up.

27 (b) By November 1, 2024, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036,
28 the department shall submit a report on the work of the stakeholder
29 group as well as the status of the program implementation to the
30 appropriate committees of the legislature and the governor. By
31 December 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, and in compliance with RCW
32 43.01.036, the department shall submit a report summarizing the
33 results of the survey as provided for in subsection (1) of this
34 section to the appropriate committees of the legislature.

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