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**SENATE BILL 5082**

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**State of Washington 69th Legislature 2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senator C. Wilson

AN ACT Relating to creating a housing assistance program for youth enrolled in extended foster care; adding a new section to chapter 74.13 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 13.34 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that approximately 13 percent of young people in extended foster care experienced homelessness in state fiscal year 2024. To obtain housing, many young people who are dependent at age 18 are required to exit extended foster care to access certain federal housing vouchers and thereby lose the support of extended foster care.

Accordingly, the state is unable to leverage existing resources, including federal benefits, as young people use up their eligibility for time-limited federal programs while they simultaneously decline other programs needed for long-term success. Statutory changes are required to ensure dependent young people in extended foster care are stably housed as they prepare for independence.

It is the intent of the legislature to create a housing program which provides a benefit to dependent young people in extended foster care that is equivalent to the benefit provided by the federal foster youth to independence program, such that young people in extended foster care can receive housing assistance while they are dependent and still benefit from the federal program when they turn 21.

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

(1) The extended foster care housing program is established to provide rental assistance and associated housing fees to eligible youth. The extended foster care housing program is intended to prevent and alleviate homelessness among youth enrolled in extended foster care.

(2) Youth are eligible for the extended foster care housing program if they are:

(a) Receiving extended foster care services pursuant to RCW 13.34.267; and

(b) Experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of experiencing homelessness as defined by RCW 13.34.030.

(3) The department shall conduct a competitive procurement process to identify an entity or entities to contract with for operation of the extended foster care housing program. The contractors must have a demonstrated understanding of the importance of stable housing for youth involved with the child welfare system. If no outside entity or entities are available to operate the program or specific parts of the program, the department may operate the program or the specific parts that are not operated by an outside entity.

(4) The extended foster care housing program shall provide rental assistance based on the following criteria:

(a) Rental assistance is provided to eligible dependent youth for up to 36 months not to extend for any young person beyond age 21;

(b) The amount of rental assistance must be based on the fair market rent in the eligible youth's location;

(c) Eligible youth shall pay no more than 30 percent of their adjusted gross income toward rent, including the extended foster care subsidy; and

(d) If the youth's rent and utilities exceed the fair market rent for that location, the youth's contribution may not exceed 40 percent of their monthly adjusted gross income, including the extended foster care subsidy.

(5) The department shall ensure that all eligible youth receive access to rental housing assistance.

(6) The department shall collect data on the housing status of youth in extended foster care on an annual basis.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 13.34 RCW to read as follows:

The department shall conduct a transition planning process with youth enrolled in extended foster care at least three months prior to their 21st birthday. The transition planning process must include, but is not limited to:

(1) Assessing the youth's continued housing and financial stability;

(2) Supporting the youth to apply to a federally funded housing voucher program, when available, and if applicable;

(3) Providing referrals to housing assistance; and

(4) Providing referrals to benefits and services that support the financial stability of the youth including education, employment, physical and behavioral health care, and other available public benefits.

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