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## Early Learning & Human Services Committee

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### HB 1429

**Brief Description:** Creating a housing assistance program for youth enrolled in extended foster care.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Taylor, Cortes, Leavitt, Simmons, Davis, Berry, Peterson, Reed, Ramel, Gregerson, Goodman, Fey, Salahuddin, Obras, Fosse, Hill and Scott.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates an extended foster care housing program to provide rental assistance and associated housing fees for youth who are receiving extended foster care and experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of experiencing homelessness.
- Provides rental assistance for up to 36 months based on the fair market rent in an eligible youth's location.
- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to conduct a transition planning process with youth in extended foster care at least three months before their twenty-first birthday.

**Hearing Date:** 1/28/25

**Staff:** Luke Wickham (786-7146).

#### Background:

*Child Welfare (Dependency).*

Anyone, including the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), may file a petition in court alleging that a child should be a dependent of the state due to abuse, neglect, or because

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there is no parent, guardian, or custodian capable of adequately caring for the child. If a court determines that a child is dependent, the court will conduct periodic reviews and make determinations regarding the child's placement, provision of services by the DCYF, and compliance and progress of the parents.

When a child is removed from the home of a parent or guardian due to allegations of abuse or neglect, the child may be placed with relatives or in foster care. Foster parents are licensed by either the DCYF or private child-placing agencies and provide temporary care to children with the goal of reunifying the child with their parent or guardian. The DCYF may not discharge a child to an independent living situation before the child turns 18 unless the child becomes emancipated.

When a dependent youth is between the ages of 17 and 17-and-a-half, the DCYF must provide the youth with written documentation explaining the availability of extended foster care services and detailed instructions regarding how to access those services after reaching the age of 18.

#### *Extended Foster Care.*

Young adults who are dependent when they turn age 18 and meet certain qualifying criteria may agree to continue receiving foster care services up to the age of 21 by entering into a voluntary placement agreement. A voluntary placement agreement is a written voluntary agreement of a nonminor dependent who agrees to submit to the care and authority of the DCYF for purposes of participating in extended foster care. In addition, qualifying young adults who had their dependency end at age 18 may elect later to enter into a voluntary placement agreement to access extended foster care at any time up to the age of 21.

Young adults in extended foster care may live in a foster home placement or in a supervised independent living placement such as an apartment, a college dormitory, or a shared roommate setting. When placed in a foster home, the foster family receives foster care maintenance payments to support the young adult's living expenses; young adults in a supervised independent living placement receive payments directly for living expenses. Additional extended foster care services may include assistance in meeting basic needs, independent living services, medical assistance, and counseling or treatment, among other services.

To qualify for extended foster care, a youth must be:

- enrolled in a secondary educational program;
- enrolled in or able to demonstrate intent to enroll in a postsecondary academic or vocational program;
- participating in an employment program;
- employed for 80 hours or more per month; or
- not able to engage in any of these activities due to a documented medical condition.

Eligible young adults may enter and exit the extended foster care program as they wish until their twenty-first birthday.

## **Summary of Bill:**

### *Extended Foster Care Housing Program.*

An extended foster care housing program (program) is established to provide rental assistance and associated housing fees to eligible youth. Youth are eligible for this program if they are receiving extended foster care services and experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of experiencing homelessness.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) must conduct a competitive procurement process to identify entities to contract with for the operation of this 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 entities are available to operate the program, the DCYF may operate the program.

The program must provide rental assistance for up to 36 months based on the fair market rent in the eligible youth's location. Eligible youth must not pay more than 30 percent of their adjusted gross income toward rent. If a young person'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.

The DCYF must ensure that all eligible youth receive access to rental housing assistance and must collect data on the housing status of youth in extended foster care.

### *Transition Planning.*

The DCYF must conduct a transition planning process for youth enrolled in extended foster care at least three months before their 21st birthday that includes:

- assessing the person's housing and financial stability;
- applying for federally funded housing voucher programs; and
- providing appropriate housing, service, and benefit referrals.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Preliminary fiscal note available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.