
Early Learning & Human Services Committee

HB 2455

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

Sponsors: Representatives Taylor, Cortes, Street, Parshley, Scott, Salahuddin, Obras, Simmons, Fey, Bergquist, Pollet, Goodman, Nance, Reed, Timmons, Hill and Reeves.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a two-year extended foster care housing assistance pilot program to provide rental assistance to up to 50 youth who are receiving extended foster care services and are experiencing homelessness.
- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to conduct a transition planning process related to housing and financial stability with youth enrolled in extended foster care at least three months before their 21st birthday.

Hearing Date: 1/28/26

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

Background:

Extended Foster Care.

Young adults who are dependent when they turn age 18 may agree to continue receiving foster care services up to age 21, including assistance in meeting basic needs, independent living services, medical assistance, and counseling or treatment, among other services. A young adult enrolled in extended foster care may elect to receive a licensed foster care placement or may live

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independently. When placed in a foster home, the foster family receives foster care maintenance payments to support the young adult's living expenses; young adults living independently receive payments directly in the form of a supervised independent living subsidy, equivalent to a foster care maintenance payment. If a youth who is living independently is not residing in an approved supervised independent living setting, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) must continue to pay the supervised independent living subsidy while it works with the youth to identify an appropriate living arrangement.

Housing Vouchers for Former Foster Youth.

The DCYF's Foster Care Housing Program provides access to housing vouchers, temporary rental assistance, housing navigation, and case management for young people ages 18 through 24 who were in foster care after their 16th birthday. Referrals to the program may be made by the young person themselves or any adult supporting them in their transition from foster care. In order to qualify, the person must have recently left foster care or plan to leave foster care or extended foster care within 90 days of signing a lease agreement.

The DCYF contracts with community-based organizations to provide program services in conjunction with federal housing vouchers provided by local public housing authorities through the federal Foster Youth to Independence Program (FYI). The FYI housing vouchers provide up to 36 months of housing assistance for former foster youth under age 25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In general, participants in the FYI pay 30 percent of their monthly adjusted income towards rent, and the voucher pays the remaining portion of the rent. The FYI vouchers are not available to individuals who are participating in extended foster care.

Summary of Bill:

Extended Foster Care Housing Pilot Program.

The DCYF must establish an extended foster care housing pilot program (pilot program) to provide rental assistance and associated housing fees to 50 eligible youth. The pilot program must be operational for a period of two years, starting January 1, 2027. To be eligible for assistance through the pilot program, a youth must be receiving extended foster care services and experiencing homelessness, or, subject to appropriation, at imminent risk of homelessness.

Under the pilot program, rental assistance is provided to eligible youth for up to 24 months not to extend beyond age 21. The amount of rental assistance must be based on the fair market rent in the youth's location, and the youth may not pay more than 30 percent of their adjusted gross income toward rent, including their extended foster care subsidy. If the youth's rent and utilities exceed the fair market rent for their location, the youth's contribution may not exceed 40 percent of their monthly adjusted gross income, including their extended foster care subsidy.

The DCYF must conduct a competitive procurement process to identify one or more entities to contract with for operation of the pilot program. Contractors must have a demonstrated understanding of the importance of stable housing for youth involved with the child welfare system. The DCYF may operate the pilot program or specific parts of the pilot program if no

outside entity is available.

By June 30, 2029, the DCYF must report to the Legislature on the outcome of the pilot program, including:

- the number of youth served by the pilot program, the number of months each youth was served, and the total amount of assistance provided to each youth;
- the age, gender, and race or ethnicity of the youth assisted by the pilot program;
- the counties represented by the pilot program's participants, and the cost of the rental assistance provided to each youth, by county;
- the number of youth on the waitlist for the pilot program, if any; and
- any other information that the DCYF deems useful for the Legislature's consideration.

Transition Planning.

The DCYF must 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:

- assessing the youth's continued housing and financial stability;
- supporting the youth to apply to a federally funded housing voucher program, when available, and if applicable;
- providing referrals to housing assistance; and
- 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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