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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5620**

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**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Human Services (originally sponsored by Senators Cleveland, Frame, Hasegawa, Lias, Nobles, and C. Wilson)

READ FIRST TIME 02/18/25.

1       AN ACT Relating to codifying the rights of children and youth in  
2 foster care; adding a new section to chapter 74.13 RCW; and creating  
3 a new section.

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

5       NEW SECTION.   **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that young people in  
6 foster care will benefit from having a statutory declaration and  
7 notification of certain rights. The statutory rights in this section  
8 are not intended to limit or supersede other rights afforded to  
9 children and youth in foster care. The legislature intends to improve  
10 the health, well-being, and safety of children and youth in foster  
11 care by declaring these rights.

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

14       (1) Youth that are placed in out-of-home care subject to a  
15 dependency proceeding under chapter 13.34 RCW have the following  
16 rights:

17       (a) The right to be treated equally regardless of actual or  
18 perceived race, ethnicity, heritage, national origin, disability,  
19 medical problems, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and

1 gender expression, as well as freedom from discrimination in  
2 accordance with applicable state laws;

3 (b) Priority placement with a relative or suitable person with  
4 whom the child or youth has a relationship and feels comfortable;

5 (c) Placement with a foster care provider, where necessary, who  
6 has been provided with relevant case information about the child or  
7 youth's unique history as it relates to the child or youth's care  
8 needs and who has met training requirements to provide for those  
9 needs;

10 (d) Placement or visitation with siblings;

11 (e) A determination whether an out-of-home placement can meet the  
12 child or youth's needs or if placement in another available placement  
13 setting best meets their needs in the least restrictive environment;

14 (f) Reasonable connections to the child's or youth's community  
15 and supports, including communication and contact with people outside  
16 the foster care system who are important to the child or youth,  
17 unless otherwise limited by law or court order;

18 (g) To not be deprived of the opportunity to receive a basic  
19 education due to out-of-home placement resulting from a dependency  
20 proceeding;

21 (h) Legal representation as described in RCW 13.34.090(1) and  
22 13.34.212, as well as attendance of court hearings;

23 (i) To consent to their adoption or guardianship if over age 14;

24 (j) To report abuse, neglect, exploitation, or violation of these  
25 rights without retaliation;

26 (k) To consent to behavioral and health care treatment and  
27 services as otherwise allowed by state law;

28 (l) Personal belongings including wearing the child's or youth's  
29 own clothing, having a safe place to store personal belongings, and  
30 having personal belongings transported in appropriate luggage with  
31 the child or youth during or shortly after a change of placement;

32 (m) Freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures of personal  
33 belongings;

34 (n) Confidentiality regarding case file and personal information  
35 as well as access and review of personal case records;

36 (o) To enter into extended foster care upon turning age 18 and up  
37 to age 21; and

38 (p) When 18 or older and leaving foster care, being provided with  
39 the youth's birth certificate, social security card, immigration  
40 documents, health insurance information, medical records, case

1 records, education records, either a driver's license or a state-  
2 issued identicard, written information including the youth's family  
3 history and contact information for siblings, if appropriate, and  
4 proof of foster care.

5 (2) By September 1, 2025, the department shall update and make  
6 available to department staff a pamphlet containing the rights  
7 afforded to youth in foster care and the responsibilities of the  
8 department. At a minimum, the pamphlet must:

9 (a) Be concise, but provide references to resources and services  
10 available to children and youth in care;

11 (b) At a minimum, describe the rights as articulated under this  
12 chapter as well as any other relevant information; and

13 (c) Provide information on how to contact caseworkers in an  
14 emergency.

15 (3) The pamphlet required under this section must be made  
16 available by the department to all foster youth as they enter care,  
17 move placements, transition to extended foster care, and shall also  
18 be published on the department's website.

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