

Legislative Analysis



FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE ACT

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House Bill 5590

Sponsor: Rep. Brenda Clack

Committee: Family and Children Services

Complete to 5-11-04

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 5590 AS INTRODUCED 2-24-04

The bill would enact a new act to be known as the Foster Care Independence Act, which would require the Family Independence Agency (FIA) to establish a foster care independence program that offers education, training, employment, and financial support for young adults (i.e., individuals between 14 and 21 years of age) leaving foster care.

The program would include the following: (1) identifying young adults who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age and assisting them in making the transition to self-sufficiency, receiving the education, training, and services necessary to find employment, and preparing and entering postsecondary training and educational institutions; (2) providing personal and emotional support to young adults aging out of foster care; and (3) providing financial, housing, counseling, employment, education, and other appropriate support and services to individuals ages 18 to 21 years of age formerly in foster care to assist them in making the transition from adolescence to adulthood and self-sufficiency.

The FIA would be required to provide the following goods and services to eligible young adults in the program: (1) services unavailable via other funding sources or agencies for young adults in or out of foster care; (2) educational support; (3) classes on interpersonal communication, relationship building, and independent living skills; and (4) stipends to cover the cost of utility deposits, security deposits, and first month's rent to individuals between 18 and 21 years of age who are leaving or who have left foster care. In addition, the FIA could also provide other goods and services allowed under federal law or that the department deems appropriate.

A young adult would be eligible for services under the bill if he or she is or has been in a foster care placement through the state because of child abuse or neglect on or after his or her 14th birthday. A young adult would not be eligible for services if (1) he or she was in an out-of-home placement solely as an adjudicated delinquent (unless he or she was eligible prior the adjudication, in which case services could be provided after the delinquency case closes); (2) he or she was never in an out-of-home placement because of child abuse or neglect; or (3) he or she is in a detention facility or other state-operated facility.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The legislation follows federal requirements and current FIA policy closely. However, due to the fact that the bill requires, instead of allows, FIA to provide each of the listed services identified in Section 4, it appears the legislation could require an increase in state spending. The potential increase is indeterminate at this time.

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.