

Weekly Legislative Update: **Children's Services**

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Our bills continue to move through the process. They all made it out of committee before the cutoff. Now the next hurdle is to get out of the fiscal committees before the Friday cutoff. **HB 1186 Making permanent and expanding the child welfare housing assistance program** has been referred to Rules. With the exception of **SB 5230 Extended Foster Care** the other bills have been heard in their respective fiscal committees and are waiting to be scheduled for executive session. **SB 5230** has a hearing in Ways and Means on Monday and needs your support.

Bills Needing Action This Week

Please read Bills We Support to see the latest status of other bills.

SB 5230 Concerning extended Foster Care has a hearing on February 20th at 9am in the Ways and Means Committee

- Please [sign in PRO](#)
- Take one more step and email the Chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, Christine Rolfes and ask her to schedule **SB 5230** for executive session before the cutoff, February 24th. Her email is Christine.Rolfes@leg.wa.gov

Bills We Support

HB 1186/SB 5256 Making permanent and expanding the child welfare housing assistance program. This bill makes permanent a pilot program which provides housing vouchers, rental assistance, navigation and other support services to a parent of a child in out-of-home care in which a lack of appropriate housing is a remaining barrier to reunification or where housing instability is a barrier to remaining in the home. It expands the pilot to one or more counties both east and west of the Cascades. The bill is intended to reduce the need for foster care placement and shorten out of home care when placement is necessary.

HB 1405/SB 5397 Preserving public benefit payments to people in the care of the department of children, youth, and families. DCYF can no longer apply a child's benefit payments to reimbursement of that child's care. When a child comes into care, DCYF must 1) assess whether

a child is eligible for benefits (10-12% of foster youth receive disability, survivor, or veterans' benefits while closer to 20% are eligible) and 2) develop and implement a financial literacy program for benefit recipients.

SB 5230 Concerning Extended Foster Care: Increases scope of present program. Creates a Post extended Foster Care Program in the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) to support youth and young adults ages 21 through 25 who were in out-of-home care on their 18th birthday. Directs DCYF to make a number of changes to the Extended Foster Care Program, including changing the eligibility requirements so that a youth no longer has to meet federal eligibility requirements to be eligible for extended foster care.

HB 1278/SB 5124 Supporting guardianships and voluntary placement with non-relative kin. Eligibility for guardianship subsidies is expanded to include any guardian who is a licensed foster parent, instead of just relatives licensed as foster parents. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is authorized to provide subsidies for eligible guardians who are appointed as guardians of an Indian child by a tribal court.

How You Can Be Involved

- Demands on the budget will be great this year. Advocacy will be crucial in securing the funding needed to support the State's population of at-risk children.
- Please follow the weekly legislative newsletter and any action alerts.
- Contacting legislators as an individual can be impactful.
- If you are interested in researching and following a particular issue, please contact Janet Hedgepath at jhedgepath@lwvwa.org.