

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

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Take a deep breath and relax this week. Most of our bills advanced to the Rules Committees in their respective chambers. **SB 5230 Extended Foster Care** didn't get out of Ways and Means and has no companion bill in the house. It is likely that that initiative is finished for this session. **SB 5397 Preserving public benefit payments to people in the care of the department of children, youth, and families** also did not make it out of the Ways and Means Committee. However, its companion bill **HB 1405** was voted out of Appropriations which keeps hope alive that it can still become a law.

Bills Needing Action This Week

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

No action this week

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.

Current status: Both bills were passed out of their respective finance committees and sent to Rules

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.

Current status: **HB 1405** made it out of Appropriations but **SB 5397** did not advance from the Ways and Means Committee

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.

Current status: **5230** went to an executive hearing in the Ways and Means Committee but no action was taken.

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.

Current status: Both bills were passed out of their respective finance committees and sent to Rules

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.