

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

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The second week of the session saw bills being introduced that build on or enhance the Thriving Families Initiative passed several years ago. The bills aim to strengthen family/kin relationships to prevent out-of-home placement, reduce time in out-of-home care or create better outcomes for children and youth who will not be returning home. If passed their efficacy will depend on funding.

Bills Needing Action This Week

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

Sign in "Pro" for the following bills this week:

You may express support for bills in hearings with the online process. **Remember, only authorized members can speak for the League; the Issue Chairs will do that, so please leave the "Organization" box blank.** A more powerful influence is many voices speaking for themselves rather than many voices speaking for the League.

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.

SB 5256 has a hearing on Monday, January 23, at 10:30 in the Senate Human Services Committee. **Please [sign in PRO](#).**

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.

HB 1405 has a hearing on Tuesday January 24, at 1:30pm in the House Human Services, Youth and Early Learning Committee. **Please [sign in PRO](#).**

SB 5397 has a hearing on Monday, January 23, at 10:30 in the Senate Human Services Committee. **Please [sign in PRO](#).**

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.

SB 5230 has a hearing on January 23 at 10:30am in the Senate Human Services Committee. **Please [sign in PRO](#).**

Email your Legislators to support these bills:

No emails this week, check back for future updates.

Use the link to email to any/all of your legislators, letting them know these bills are important to their constituents. HB ("House Bill") to Representatives, SB ("Senate Bill") to your Senator.

Bills We Support

Additional bills will be added in the coming weeks.

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.