

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

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This week we get to catch our breath and do a little celebration dance. **HB1186 Making permanent and expanding the child welfare housing assistance program** was voted out of executive session with a recommendation to pass. All the other bills in both the House and Senate committees are scheduled in executive session this week. Stay posted.

Bills Needing Action This Week

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

No hearings this week

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

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.

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@lwwva.org.