

Assembly Bill 531

Achieving the Vision of Extended Foster Care

Assemblymember Friedman

SUMMARY

California was among the first states to opt into a federal opportunity to create an Extended Foster Care (EFC) program in 2010, serving foster youth ages 18-21. The EFC Program represented a historic expansion of services to foster youth, intended to address the poor outcomes faced by youth as they emancipate from the foster care system at age 18. Nine years later, the vision of the EFC Program is yet to be achieved.

ISSUE

Participation rates in the EFC Program are much higher than originally anticipated. While this is a positive sign that young adults welcome the additional assistance from the foster care system, it has overwhelmed the counties' capacity to meet the needs of all young adults in care. California's high housing costs, coupled with youth who are unprepared for our state's tight housing market, has led to housing instability and homelessness.

In Chapin Hall's recent CalYouth study, over 35 percent of youth reported they experienced homelessness while actively enrolled in extended foster care. Social workers with increasing caseloads lack the time to support the youth as they transition to adulthood.

Without sufficient supports from skilled social workers and lacking appropriate housing, the vision of extended foster care is falling flat. Failure to support youth while they are in EFC results in increased chronic homelessness and disconnection as adults, which further traumatizes these young adults at a critical time in their young lives when they need security and stability to succeed.

THIS BILL

AB 531 ensures that all non-minor dependents in foster care can access and stabilize in housing by:

- Developing housing navigators to aid young adults in locating and securing appropriate housing;
- Requiring counties to examine and report on their ability to meet the emergency housing needs of youth who are in extended foster care;
- Requiring counties to "hold" placements for up to 14 days if the non-minor dependent has provided notice of intent to return within 14 days or the program has reason to believe the youth will be returning;
- Allowing for supervised independent living placements (SILPS) to remain as a housing option as long as it meets health and safety standards once every 12 months, and
- Restructuring the host family transitional housing model to allow families already licensed as a resource family to be eligible to serve as a host family and to divide the THP payment between the caregiver, young adult and provider.

SUPPORT

- Alliance for Children's Rights (**Co-sponsor**)
- Children's Law Center of California (**Co-Sponsor**)
- Children Now (**Co-Sponsor**)
- County Welfare Directors Association of California (**Co-Sponsor**)
- GRACE (**Co-Sponsor**)

CONTACT

Allison Ruff-Schuurman, Chief of Staff
Allison.RuffSchuurman@asm.ca.gov
Phone: (916) 319-2043