

Op0'] [Date of Hearing: June 2, 2020

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

AB 1979 (Friedman) – As Introduced January 23, 2020

Policy Committee: Human Services

Vote: 8 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill increases the housing options available for youth in the extended foster care system. Among its provisions, this bill:

- 1) Expands the definition of a supervised independent living setting (SILS) to include a transitional living setting approved by the county to support youth who are entering or reentering foster care or transitioning between placements.
- 2) Allows a county to certify, once every 12 months, that a supervised independent living placement (SILP) meets health and safety standards, as specified.
- 3) Requires the evaluations conducted by county placement agencies on the county's placement resources and programs, as required by current law, include the needs of youth in extended foster care.
- 4) Requires a county placement agency to examine the county's ability to meet the emergency housing needs of youth in extended foster care.
- 5) Requires a county to continue to approve payment to a transitional housing provider for up to 14 days in a calendar month in which the foster youth is absent for specified reasons.
- 6) Prohibits transitional housing placement providers from filling a foster youth's place if the foster youth is temporarily absent from the transitional housing for 14 days or less, with exceptions.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Estimated annual costs in the range of \$175,000 (GF) to \$250,000 (GF) to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to pay transitional housing providers for up to 14 days in a calendar month in which the foster youth is absent and does not return to the same provider. This estimate assumes between 5% and 10% of foster youth in these settings are absent for the full 14 days. These costs could be substantially different depending on number and length of absences.
- 2) No state costs to CDSS to allow a county to include a transitional living setting, approved by the county, as an additional placement option for foster youth entering or reentering foster care or transitioning between placements.

- 3) Unknown costs to counties to each evaluate their ability to meet the emergency housing needs of youth in extended foster care.

(Pursuant to Proposition 30 (November 2012), legislation enacted after September 30, 2012, that has an overall effect of increasing the costs already borne by a local agency for programs or levels of service mandated by realignment (including child welfare services and foster care) apply to local agencies only to the extent that the state provides annual funding for the cost increase.)

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** This bill seeks to address affordable housing issues for older foster youth who are reentering foster care or who are transitioning between placements in extended foster care.
- 2) **Background.** AB 12 (Beall), Chapter 559, Statutes of 2010, provided foster care benefits for eligible youth (referred to as nonminor dependents, or NMDs) aging out of the Child Welfare Services system. Prior to the passage of AB 12, youth aged out of the foster care system at 18 years old and were required to obtain education, stable housing and employment without the support of the CWS system. In recognition of the difficulties faced by these youth, AB 12 provided services and supports to transition-age youth until they reach 21 years of age. In doing so, AB 12 afforded these youth the opportunity to experience independent living in supervised living environments and the ability to obtain educational and employment training to better prepare them to transition into adulthood and self-sufficiency.

It is well documented that youth who age out of the foster care system are at high risk of becoming homeless. Accordingly, California makes available several housing programs to foster youth aging out of the system. This bill continues to improve these options.

3) **Prior Legislation.**

AB 531 (Friedman), of this legislative session, is similar to this bill and allows certain approved caregivers to convert to a host family without additional certification, requires counties to examine their ability to meet the emergency housing needs of NMDs, and allows a county welfare agency to, upon appropriation, request funds to provide housing navigation services to youth, among other things. AB 531 was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.

AB 612 (Mitchell), Chapter 731, Statutes of 2017, made a number of changes to the rules and educational requirements for transitional housing programs available to minors and NMDs in foster care.