

Date of Hearing: April 10, 2019

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

AB 531 (Friedman) – As Introduced February 13, 2019

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. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Allows certain approved caregivers to be automatically converted to a transitional housing host family without additional certification.
- 2) Allows a county to certify that a supervised independent living placement (SILP) meets health and safety standards once every 12 months, so long as the housing option is listed in a county-maintained database and the county has no reason to believe the health and safety conditions of the housing option have changed.
- 3) Requires a transitional housing provider, if an eligible foster youth receiving transitional housing services lives with a host family, to ensure the payment is equally divided between the transitional housing placement provider, the host family and the eligible foster youth, unless a different apportionment is agreed to by all parties.
- 4) Requires a county placement agency to examine a county's ability to meet the emergency housing needs of youth in extended foster care.
- 5) Requires a county to continue to approve payments to a transitional housing placement provider for up to 14 days in a calendar month in which the foster youth is absent for specified reasons.
- 6) Allows, subject to an appropriation in the annual Budget Act, a child welfare agency to request funding from the Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide housing navigation services and additional housing-related financial assistance to certain youth to assist in securing housing and housing stability.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) Unknown, ongoing costs, likely in the low millions of dollars (GF) annually to support existing foster homes transitioning to become host families for youth in extended foster care.
- 2) Ongoing costs of approximately \$15 million (\$10 million GF) annually to counties for housing navigation services, subject to an appropriation in the annual budget act.

- 3) Ongoing costs of approximately \$2 million (GF) annually to counties for housing-related financial assistance to certain youth, subject to an appropriation in the annual budget act.
- 4) Unknown costs to counties to evaluate their ability to meet the emergency housing needs of youth in extended foster care.

(This proposal is also being pursued in the legislative budget process.)

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

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