

## CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 674 (Bennett)

As Amended August 26, 2021

Majority vote

### SUMMARY

Expands the list of information, documents, and services that a county welfare department, at the last review hearing prior to that youth's 18th birthday, must report to the court on its progress in providing to the youth written information notifying the minor or nonminor that they may be eligible to receive, and where they may apply for, CalFresh benefits.

#### Senate Amendments

Add language from AB 546 (Maienschein) of the current legislative session to avoid chaptering out conflicts.

### COMMENTS

*Child welfare services system:* The goal of California's Child Welfare Services (CWS) system is ultimately to protect children from abuse and neglect, and provide for their health, safety, and overall well-being. When a child is identified as being at risk of abuse or neglect, the juvenile court holds legal jurisdiction and the CWS system appoints a social worker to ensure the needs of the child are met. Through the CWS system, multiple opportunities arise for the judicial system to evaluate, review, and determine the custody of the child, or determine the best out-of-home placement for the youth. Together, the judicial system and the child's social worker work to ensure that the best possible services are provided to the child. The CWS system, when appropriate, also works to reunite children who have been removed from the custody of their parents or guardians with individuals they consider to be family in order to maintain familial bonds wherever possible. Current law requires the court to periodically review the youth's case to ensure their needs are being met; as a part of this review process, social workers are required to submit reports to the court detailing the services and supports that have been provided to the youth, such as employment assistance and information related to health care and education, among other information. As of October 1, 2020, there were 60,045 youth placed in California's child welfare system.

*Extended foster care:* In 2010, AB 12 (Beall), Chapter 559, Statutes of 2010, extended foster care benefits for certain eligible youth until the age of 21. Prior to the expansion of foster care benefits, youth "aged out" of the CWS system at 18 years old and were required to navigate the challenges of young adulthood, including obtaining education, stable housing, and employment, without the support of the CWS system. In recognition of the difficulties faced by these youth, extended foster care provides eligible youth between the ages of 18 and 21, known as NMDs, with the services and supports they need to experience independent living in supervised living environments. Extended foster care also enables youth to obtain educational and employment training to better prepare them to transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency.

In order to be eligible for extended foster care, youth must meet a number of criteria, including the requirement that a youth be in foster care under the responsibility of the county welfare or probation department on their 18th birthday, as well as meet the goals of a Transitional Independent Living Case Plan (TILCP), which describes the goals and objectives of how the NMD will make progress in the transition to living independently and will ultimately assume

responsibility for themselves as an independent adult. The TILCP includes a transitional independent living plan (TILP) that ensures the youth is actively and meaningfully participating in one or more of the five criteria that must be met in order to participate in extended foster care, as well as the NMD's supervised placement setting, and the youth's permanent plan for transitioning to independent living.

Some youth choose to participate in extended foster care immediately following their 18th birthday, while others leave the foster care system after attaining 18 years of age, but choose to reenter care at some point before their 21st birthday under what is called a "voluntary reentry agreement." A voluntary reentry agreement is a written agreement between the youth and the county welfare or probation department, or a tribal placing entity, that documents the youth's desire and willingness to reenter foster care and be placed in a supervised setting under the placement and care responsibility of the placing agency, among other requirements.

*CalFresh:* SNAP is known as CalFresh in California, and provides food access to low-income individuals who meet certain eligibility criteria. CalFresh benefits are entirely federally funded, and administration at the federal level lies with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA is tasked with setting specific eligibility requirements for SNAP programs across the country, as well as gross and net income tests, work requirements, and other documentation requirements. In California, CalFresh is administered at the local level by county human services agencies, with federal, state, and county governments sharing the costs of program administration. Benefits are made available to recipients on an electronic benefits card (EBT) card, which is an automated teller machine (ATM)-like card that allows an individual to purchase food at point-of-sale devices in stores. Nearly 4 million individuals in California receive CalFresh benefits; the maximum grant amount for a household size of one is \$204 as of October 1, 2020, and in December 2020, the average household grant was \$222 per month.

*Foster youth and CalFresh:* The CalYOUTH study, which is administered by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, and is conducted in collaboration with CDSS and the County Welfare Directors Association of California, evaluates the impacts of extended foster care on foster youth transitioning to adulthood. The 2020 CalYOUTH study found that more than half of the youth surveyed (718 young people) reported that they had ever received CalFresh benefits. Of these youth, nearly 58% reported currently receiving CalFresh benefits, and 32.1% of all CalYOUTH participants were currently receiving CalFresh. Over two-fifths of youth who had ever received CalFresh reported receiving assistance for more than six months during the previous year, and the average monthly grant received was about \$253.

*Need for this bill:* The provisions of this bill seek to increase older foster youth enrollment in CalFresh by ensuring youth are informed about their potential eligibility for CalFresh benefits. Specifically, the provisions of this bill expand the existing list of information, documents, and services that a county welfare department must report to the court its progress in providing to the youth to include written information notifying the minor or nonminor that they may be eligible to receive, and where they may apply for, CalFresh benefits.

#### **According to the Author**

"Young people exiting the foster care system are already at a significant disadvantage to their peers. Their housing, education, and job situations can be very unstable. In situations like this, food insecurity is often overlooked, but is of significant importance. We know that only 33% of foster youth have ever accessed CalFresh benefits. These young people have foregone bill

payments, skipped meals, or rely on food banks to receive their daily meals simply because they are either unaware of CalFresh benefits or think their foster care payment and/or income will make them ineligible for CalFresh. We must address this inequity. [This bill] seeks to increase foster youth enrollment into CalFresh by providing vital information regarding benefits to transitional-aged youth as they are exiting out of California's foster care system. No young person should go hungry simply due to a lack of information."

### **Arguments in Support**

The County Welfare Directors Association of California states, "Because youth aging out of foster care are particularly at risk of experiencing poverty, they are also disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. Poor nutrition and food insecurity – compounded by lack of health care, limited social connections and insufficient housing – can contribute to many diet-related illnesses. CalFresh benefits act as a buffer against the economic and health impacts of food insecurity.

"[This bill] would codify an existing state-identified best practice – to provide written information about CalFresh eligibility and where to apply for benefits to foster youth before they turn age 18."

### **Arguments in Opposition**

None on file

## **FISCAL COMMENTS**

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee on July 15, 2021, pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, this bill would result in negligible state costs.

## **VOTES:**

### **ASM HUMAN SERVICES: 8-0-0**

**YES:** Calderon, Davies, Arambula, Choi, Gipson, Stone, Villapudua, Ward

### **ASM JUDICIARY: 11-0-0**

**YES:** Stone, Gallagher, Chau, Chiu, Davies, Lorena Gonzalez, Holden, Kalra, Kiley, Maienschein, Reyes

### **ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 16-0-0**

**YES:** Lorena Gonzalez, Bigelow, Bloom, Calderon, Carrillo, Chau, Megan Dahle, Davies, Fong, Gabriel, Eduardo Garcia, Kalra, Levine, Nazarian, Quirk, Robert Rivas

### **ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 77-0-1**

**YES:** Aguiar-Curry, Arambula, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Bigelow, Bloom, Boerner Horvath, Burke, Calderon, Carrillo, Cervantes, Chau, Chen, Chiu, Choi, Cooley, Cooper, Cunningham, Megan Dahle, Daly, Davies, Flora, Fong, Frazier, Friedman, Gabriel, Gallagher, Cristina Garcia, Eduardo Garcia, Gipson, Lorena Gonzalez, Gray, Grayson, Holden, Irwin, Jones-Sawyer, Kalra, Kiley, Lackey, Lee, Levine, Low, Maienschein, Mathis, Mayes, McCarty, Medina, Muratsuchi, Nazarian, Nguyen, O'Donnell, Patterson, Petrie-Norris, Quirk, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Reyes, Luz Rivas, Robert Rivas, Rodriguez, Blanca Rubio, Salas, Santiago, Seyarto, Smith, Stone, Ting, Valladares, Villapudua, Voepel, Waldron, Ward, Akilah Weber, Wicks, Wood, Rendon

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Mullin

**SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1**

**YES:** Allen, Archuleta, Atkins, Bates, Becker, Borgeas, Bradford, Caballero, Cortese, Dahle, Dodd, Durazo, Eggman, Glazer, Gonzalez, Grove, Hertzberg, Hueso, Hurtado, Jones, Kamlager, Laird, Leyva, Limón, McGuire, Melendez, Min, Newman, Nielsen, Ochoa Bogh, Pan, Portantino, Roth, Rubio, Skinner, Umberg, Wieckowski, Wiener, Wilk

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Stern

**UPDATED**

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