
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1846 (Stefani) - Dependency: placement of child with relative

Version: March 18, 2026
Urgency: No
Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: JUD. 12 - 0, HUMAN S. 5 - 0
Mandate: Yes
Consultant: Bob Franzoya

Bill Summary: AB 1846 would clarify that the relative placement preference for a child who is a dependent of the juvenile court extends throughout the dependency proceeding, unless and until parental rights are terminated, as specified.

Fiscal Impact: Up to \$125,000 in FY 20267 and up to \$250,000 annually thereafter for social workers to complete the additional documentation of assessing any relative who requests placement. (General Fund)

Estimated \$90,000 additional funding is provided by Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, with the amount of Federal Financial Participation based on the 50 percent administration rate for those cases meeting federal eligibility criteria. (federal funds)

Although these county workload costs are mandated by the state, they are not reimbursable but instead must be funded by the state pursuant to Proposition 30 (2012). Proposition 30 requires 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 to apply to local agencies only to the extent the state provides annual funding for the cost increase. (General Fund)

Background: The intent of this bill is to clarify that the relative placement preference extends throughout a child's dependency proceeding unless and until parental rights are terminated, and that a child may be placed with a suitable relative, even if they have already been placed with a non-relative, if the social worker or court deem the new placement in the child's best interests. The bill clarifies that a relative requesting a placement must be assessed if the request comes prior to the termination of reunification services and gives the social worker or court the discretion to assess the suitability of a requested placement if the request comes after the termination of reunification services.

Proposed Law: The administrative cost of the potential additional documentation required for relative assessments and placements associated with this bill in FY 2026-27 and ongoing is based on the following assumptions:

- 13,227 cases of children in foster care may require additional documentation
- Social workers will require 15 minutes per case to complete the additional documentation
- The social worker rate is \$99.46.