

Date of Hearing: May 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1967 (Zbur) – As Amended March 25, 2026

Policy Committee:	Judiciary	Vote:	12 - 0
	Human Services		7 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill facilitates access to foster care services or extended foster care services by requiring certain actions by social workers and the courts relating to applications initiated by a minor or eligible nonminor on their own behalf.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires a social worker to also assess the safety of the home and those who hold custodial rights of the minor when conducting a safety assessment, as specified, when an application in the form of an affidavit alleging abuse or neglect is presented to a social worker to commence proceedings in juvenile court if submitted by a minor on their own behalf , where the minor is currently residing at a residential facility, as defined.
- 2) Authorizes the affidavit to be submitted to the social worker by mail, facsimile, or electronic mail.
- 3) Requires a juvenile court to review the decision by a social worker to not file a petition within three weeks after a nonminor has applied on their own behalf to the social worker to commence proceedings in juvenile court and either affirm the decision or order the social worker to commence juvenile court proceedings within 14 days of the minor’s or their attorney’s application to the court for review.
- 4) Authorizes a qualifying nonminor to enter into a voluntary reentry agreement to establish eligibility for foster care benefits before or after filing a petition to assume dependency if either the nonminor’s guardian(s), or adoptive parent(s), as applicable have died, or the nonminor is no longer receiving support from the nonminor’s guardian(s) or adoptive parent(s).
- 5) Requires the juvenile court to order that any benefits being paid on behalf of the nonminor under the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment Program (Kin-GAP) or Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster-Care (AFDC-FC), or the adoption assistance program be suspended until the juvenile court determines it should not assume dependency jurisdiction over the nonminor or until the juvenile court terminates the dependency jurisdiction over the nonminor subsequent to assuming dependency jurisdiction over the nonminor, as applicable.

- 6) States that the suspension of payments as described in item 5, above, does not authorize or require an accounting or investigation regarding the use of payments made prior to the suspension.
- 7) Provides that the suspension of benefits is effective as of the date the nonminor executes the voluntary reentry agreement, unless the court specifies a different effective date not later than the first day of the next benefit cycle.
- 8) Requires the placing agency to, within one business day of execution of the voluntary reentry agreement, provide electronic notice of suspension to the appropriate payment system or systems and payor, or payors, to prevent further disbursements.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Ongoing General Fund (GF) administrative costs to county child welfare agencies of an unknown amount, potentially in the high hundreds of thousands of dollars or more annually associated with reopening cases, expanded safety assessments, and other requirements in the bill. Costs will depend on the number of affected cases, which is unknown, and the amount of additional time spent on each case.

Although these are state-mandated costs, they are not reimbursable, but instead must be funded by the state pursuant to Proposition 30, which 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 (including child welfare services and foster care) to apply to local agencies only to the extent the state provides annual funding for the cost increase

- 2) Ongoing costs to the courts (General Fund, Trial Court Trust Fund) of an unknown amount for additional workload to the extent additional cases are filed.
- 3) One-time GF automation costs in the range of \$500,000 to \$1 million for updates to the Child Welfare Services – California Automated Response and Engagement System (CWS-CARES).

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Young people in foster care who reach out for help are often doing so at a moment of crisis. Without swift access to services, they face housing instability and homelessness, which significantly hinder their pursuit of higher education, meaningful employment, and self-sufficiency. This bill ensures that youth in foster care—who are disproportionately LGBTQ+, Black, Latino, and Native American—receive the timely support and crucial interventions required to care for them and keep them safe.

- 2) **Background.** California’s foster care system provides temporary care for children who have been removed from their homes due to neglect or abuse. Through extended foster care, youths who would otherwise “age out” of the system when they turn 18 may voluntarily remain in the system from 18 to 21 and thus receive support, housing, and educational or employment assistance while transitioning to independent living. This bill makes it easier for minors living in residential facilities to access foster care services and for eligible nonminors who are no longer being supported by their guardians to access extended foster care services.

Self-Petition. When a minor who resides in a residential facility for children and youth, and not with a parent or guardian, petitions to enter foster care on their own behalf, the author and sponsors assert the conditions of the custodial parents’ home should be considered as part of the decision to initiate juvenile proceedings, not the conditions of the residential facility. They explain that while the residential facility may provide a setting that does not place the minor in sufficient danger to justify foster home placement, the home conditions that drove the minor to residential facility might pose such danger. To ensure a minor is not denied entry to the foster care system simply because the residential facility in which the minor resides is safe, this bill requires the social worker to conduct a safety assessment of the home of those who have legal custody of the minor.

Re-entry. Kin-GAP is an option for foster youth to permanently stay in a long-term placement with relatives, allowing them to officially exit foster care and live with a legal guardian who is a relative, while continuing to receive financial support and healthcare. Kin-GAP is an alternative for foster youth to find a permanent home without using the formal adoption process. Once Kin-GAP is established, the juvenile court typically dismisses the dependency case, meaning social worker supervision and regular court hearings end.

Existing law allows, when former foster youth between 18 and 20 years of age find themselves in a failed guardianship or adoption, these nonminors to petition the juvenile court to re-enter foster care if specific conditions exist. A nonminor who is receiving Kin-GAP or adoption assistance program payments whose former guardian or adoptive parent died or no longer provides ongoing support to, and is no longer receiving aid on behalf of, is permitted to petition the court to reenter foster care.

This bill facilitates nonminor access to extended foster care services when the nonminor’s guardians or adoptive parents have failed to provide the nonminor with financial support, even where the guardians or adoptive parents received state or federal subsidies (including Kin-Gap or AFDC-FC) to support the nonminor. The sponsor’s assert this will “ensure that a nonminor (aged 18 to 21 years) is not precluded from entry into extended foster care because their guardian or adoptive parent continues to collect benefits on behalf of the youth when they are not providing ongoing financial support.”

Consistent with federal and state policy guidelines, the bill requires the court to order suspension of any public payments made to the guardians or adoptive parents before the nonminor may obtain foster care benefits.