SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1967 (Zbur) - Juveniles

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

Policy Vote: JUD. 9 - 0, HUMAN S. 4 - 0
Mandate: Yes
Consultant: Bob Franzoia

Bill Summary: AB 1967 would modify procedures through which a nonminor dependent (NMD) may apply to a county social worker for a petition on their own behalf, to find them a dependent of the juvenile court.

Fiscal Impact: Annual administrative costs to county child welfare agencies, potentially in the high hundreds of thousands of dollars or more annually associated with reopening cases, expanded safety assessments, and other requirements. Costs will depend on the number of affected cases, potentially several hundred annually, and the amount of additional time spent on each case. Potential costs for higher direct benefits to NMD's reentering foster care. (General Fund)

One-time information technology 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). (General Fund)

Although these are state-mandated costs, 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 (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

Ongoing costs to the courts for additional workload to the extent additional cases are filed. An eight-hour court day costs approximately $10,500 based on the hourly rate of court personnel including at minimum the judge, clerk, bailiff, court reporter, jury administrator, administrative staff, and jury per-diems. While the courts are not funded on a workload basis, an increase in workload could result in delayed court services and would put pressure on the General Fund to fund additional staff and resources. The FY 2026-27 Budget appropriated $70 million General Fund for this purpose. (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund)

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 age 18 may voluntarily remain in the system from age 18 to age 21 and thus receive support, housing, and educational or employment assistance while transitioning to independent living.

A “voluntary reentry agreement” (VRA) is a written voluntary agreement between a former dependent child or ward or a former nonminor dependent (NMD) and the county welfare or probation department or tribal placing entity that documents the NMD’s desire and willingness to reenter foster care, to be placed in a supervised setting under the placement and care responsibility of the placing agency, the NMD’s desire, willingness, and ability to immediately participate in one or more conditions.

This bill defines “ongoing support” to mean material financial support provided to the nonminor on a continuing basis, and may include, but is not limited to, housing, food, clothing, tuition, payment for treatment or services, or other in kind or cash assistance provided directly to or for the benefit of the nonminor.

A NMD may enter into a VRA in order to establish eligibility for foster care benefit before or after filing a petition to assume dependency jurisdiction if either of the following apply:

1) The nonminor’s guardian or guardians, or adoptive parent or parents, as applicable, have died.

2) The nonminor is no longer receiving ongoing support from the nonminor’s guardian or guardians, or adoptive parent or parents.

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A NMD wanting to exit foster care before age 21 may contact their social worker, an attorney or the court and express they no longer want to stay in foster care. The county must submit a report, and the court must hold a termination hearing under Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 391 to confirm that the NMD’s decision is voluntary and informed, that required transition documents and services have been provided, and that the NMD understands their right to re-enter foster care before age 21.

Proposed Law: For FY 2024-25 there were 645 nonminors over age 18 receiving Kin-GAP benefits and 434 nonminors receiving adoption assistance program benefits. Under WIC 388.1 (4) (A), as added by the bill, if the NMD enters into a VRA, the juvenile court shall suspend any benefits until the juvenile court determines that it should not assume dependency jurisdiction over the NMD or until the juvenile court terminates dependency jurisdiction over the NMD subsequent to assuming dependency jurisdiction over the NMD.

Staff Comments: The bill states that the suspension of payments does not authorize or require an accounting or investigation regarding the use of payments made prior to the suspension. If an accounting or investigation of ongoing support cannot be made by the juvenile court or by the county or by the state it is unclear how the juvenile court can make a finding that the NMD is no longer receiving ongoing support.

Recommended Amendments: Pursuant to the Staff Comments, in WIC (4) (A) strike out:

The suspension of payments pursuant to this paragraph does not authorize or require an accounting or investigation regarding the use of payments made prior to the suspension.