
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 2478 (Schultz) - Kinship family approval

Version: June 16, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: HUMAN S. 4 - 0, JUD. 13 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Agnes Lee

Bill Summary: AB 2478 would establish a kinship family approval process for purposes of foster care placements.

Fiscal Impact:

- The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) estimates the following General Fund costs:
 - State operations costs of \$339,000 in 2026-27 and \$333,000 annually thereafter.
 - One-time costs of \$275,000 for automation updates for CWS-CARES and \$448,500 for automation costs for CalSAWS.
 - Ongoing annual costs to backfill the loss of federal Title IV-E funding for Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care is \$735,541 per 100 foster youth cases and \$581,618 per 100 non-minor dependent cases. Due to uncertainty in caseloads, the estimate was based on a cost per 100 cases. The actual caseload may potentially be lower. These costs relate to the provisions in the bill that would create a pathway for placements that received authorization by the court but were either 1) a non-relative extended family member or extended family member of an Indian child who was denied kinship family approval or 2) a non-relative extended family member or extended family member of an Indian child who was approved for the kinship family approval process but with a federal non-exemptible conviction.
- The California Department of Justice indicates no significant fiscal impact to the department.
- Unknown costs to local agencies for administration. Proposition 30 of 2012 provides that any legislation enacted after September 30, 2012 that has an overall effect of increasing the costs already borne by a local agency for realigned services applies to local agencies only to the extent that the state provides annual funding for the cost increase. Other costs may be potentially reimbursable by the state, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates.

Background: Under the child welfare services (CWS) system, social workers in each county receive reports of abuse or neglect, and investigate and resolve those reports. If it is determined that a child cannot remain in the home, even with family preservation and support services, the child comes under the jurisdiction of the county's juvenile

dependency court while the family is served by a CWS system social worker. The system seeks to ensure the safety and protection of these children, and where possible, preserve and strengthen families through visitation and family reunification.

Generally, if a child cannot be safely returned home after the time allotted for reunification services ends, the court terminates the parental rights of the child's parents. The child's case plan then focuses on permanency services, in an effort to connect the child to a permanent placement through adoption or guardianship. If an adoption or guardianship is not established, a child may remain in long-term foster care.

State law requires CDSS to implement a unified, family friendly, and child-centered resource family approval process to replace multiple processes for licensing foster family homes, certifying foster homes by licensed foster family agencies, approving relatives and nonrelative extended family members as foster care providers, and approving guardians and adoptive families.

On September 28, 2023, the federal Administration for Children and Families published a final rule regarding licensing and approval standards for kinship placements, allowing federal funding to be available on behalf of a child who is placed in a relative or kinship licensed or approved foster family home, when the agency uses different licensing or approval standards for non-relative or non-kinship foster family homes. State law requires CDSS, no later than January 1, 2027, to adopt a simplified approval process for relative caregivers consistent with the definition of foster family homes for the purposes of federal eligibility.

Proposed Law: Specific provisions of the bill would:

- Require CDSS, no later than January 1, 2028, to adopt a simplified approval process for relative and kinship caregivers consistent with the definition of foster family homes for the purposes of federal eligibility, as described.
- Provide that for purposes of the new kinship approval process, the individual or family must be a relative, a nonrelative extended family member, or an extended family member of an Indian child, as defined.
- Require CDSS to adopt standards pertaining to the home environment assessment, family engagement process, and kinship training requirements for a kinship family.
- Impose requirements on counties regarding implementation of the new kinship approval process, as specified.
- Provide that a child placed with a kinship family is eligible for the resource family basic rate.
- Condition implementation of the program upon the continued availability of federal funds for costs associated with placement of children with kinship families assessed and approved under the program.
- Make conforming changes to reflect the new kinship approval process.

- Require CDSS to examine how foster family agencies may implement a kinship approval process.

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