
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 689 (Blanca Rubio) - Foster youth: disaster aid assistance

Version: February 14, 2025

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: July 14, 2025

Policy Vote: HUMAN S. 5 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Agnes Lee

Bill Summary: AB 689 would create the Child Welfare Disaster Response Program.

Fiscal Impact:

- Ongoing General Fund cost pressures of \$2 million to fund the proposed Child Welfare Disaster Response Account.
- The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) anticipates minor and absorbable costs for state administration.

Background: CDSS oversees a system of child welfare services, including foster care, for children who have been adjudged by the court to be at risk of abuse and neglect or who have been abused or neglected, as specified. Counties are required to update and maintain Child Welfare Services Disaster Response Plans that describe the responsibilities and actions required for locating and monitoring dependent and probationary children. Disaster response plans include procedures describing how the county will do the following:

- Identify, locate, and continue availability of services for CWS children, probation children, non-minor dependents, including non-minor dependents residing in foster care, out-of-county placements, children placed in or out of California through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, cross coordination with Tribal representative for Indian children in placements, and out-of-state non-minor dependents under county care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster;
- Respond appropriately to new CWS cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster and provide services in those cases;
- Address and provide care for unaccompanied minors;
- Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster;
- Preserve essential program records; and
- Coordinate services and share information with other states and counties.

CDSS's Child Welfare Services Disaster Planning and Response Unit (DPRU) was created in 2021 to provide additional support during disasters to child welfare and probation agencies across the state. The DPRU collaborates with all 58 counties to establish processes for making, activating, and operating emergency and disaster

preparedness plans relating to children in placements under state care, from probation to foster care, to out-of-county placements. The DPRU has outlined four emergency management phases: preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation.

Proposed Law: Specific provisions of the bill would:

- Create the Child Welfare Disaster Response Program to be administered by the CDSS.
- Require CDSS to determine eligibility criteria for the allocation of funds to applicants; provide that county child welfare departments may apply for funds; and require that funds awarded must be available to meet the housing, clothing, transportation, and other tangible needs of foster children and youth and their caregivers that occur within 180 days of a local emergency proclamation by a local government or a state of emergency proclamation by the Governor.
- Create the Child Welfare Disaster Response Account; require that upon appropriation by the Legislature, \$2 million must be allocated from the General Fund to the Child Welfare Disaster Response Account for purposes of the program and to support the needs of foster children and youth and their caregivers during a disaster; and provide that gifts, donations, and bequests may be made to the Child Welfare Disaster Response Account, subject to any conditions or restrictions from CDSS.

Related Legislation: SB 589 (Alvarado-Gil, 2023) was similar to this bill. SB 589 was held on the suspense file in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

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