

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 1345 (Wahab)
As Amended August 13, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Expands the Foster Youth Bill of Rights to guarantee a foster child or nonminor dependent (NMD) reasonable access to and use of their personal belongings, and to require that belongings be transported during placement changes in a manner that preserves the youth's property and dignity, including through the use of suitcases, duffel bags, backpacks, or moving boxes rather than trash bags.

Major Provisions

- 1) Expand the existing right to private storage space to also guarantee a foster child or NMD reasonable access to, and use of, their personal belongings, clothing, and personal items.
- 2) Establish the right to have personal belongings transported during placement changes and other moves in a manner that preserves the youth's property and dignity, including the use of suitcases, duffel bags, backpacks, and moving boxes rather than trash bags or other inappropriate receptacles.

COMMENTS

History and Evolution of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights. The Foster Youth Bill of Rights codifies an enumerated list of rights held by every child and NMD in foster care. The concept began as a comparatively short statement of basic guarantees for a safe and respectful home, freedom from abuse, contact with family, and access to education, and has been amended repeatedly over the past two decades to add population- and harm-specific rights.

Subsequent iterations of these rights over the past two decades have been codified in response to documented, recurring failures in practice as it relates to rights tied to gender identity, preferred name and pronoun use, and culturally competent care for LGBTQ youth. Specific rights for Indian children were added to conform with the federal Indian Child Welfare Act and tribal affiliation; reproductive and sexual health access has been addressed; educational stability and school-of-origin protections were included, as well as the right of a foster youth to access their own records. These rights are intended to both provide an enforceable standard for foster youth and serve as a directive to caregivers, social workers, and probation officers, who are required to provide each child a copy of these rights at placement and at every placement change.

This bill builds on that premise by specifically guaranteeing a foster youth reasonable access to and use of their personal belongings, clothing, and personal items and establishing the right to have personal belongings transported during placement changes and other moves in a manner that preserves the youth's property and dignity, including through the use of suitcases, duffel bags, backpacks, and moving boxes rather than trash bags or other inappropriate receptacles.

The Role of the Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson (Office). The Office is an autonomous entity within CDSS and is required to translate the Foster Youth Bill of Rights into an accessible format to ensure they reach foster youth. Since the enactment of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights in 2001, the Office has disseminated information on the rights and, in consultation with the

County Welfare Directors Association, the Chief Probation Officers of California, tribes, foster youth advocates, and others, has developed standardized, age-appropriate materials explaining them. The Office also provides training and technical assistance on the rights of foster youth, social workers, probation officers, and tribal child welfare agencies, and at the end of each two-year legislative session, reviews amendments to foster youth law and determines whether the compiled list of rights should be updated. The Office also designs the Bill of Rights posters that facilities licensed for six or more children must post, which include the Office's toll-free number. The Office also investigates and attempts to resolve complaints regarding whether those rights have been violated. The materials the Office develops are the ones counties, probation officers, and care providers use to inform each child of their rights and are required to provide to youth via written copy at placement, at every placement change, and at least once every six months.

Equity Implications: The Foster Youth Bill of Rights includes rights related to dignity, personal belongings, and participation in case planning. Existing law also requires counties to develop placement transition planning protocols, including consideration of the child's needs and relationships during placement changes. However, current law does not specifically ensure that youth can maintain access to and use of their belongings in daily life, nor does it clearly define expectations for how belongings are handled during placement changes. Placement instability is not evenly distributed across the foster care population, and children with more placement changes have an increased possibility of experiencing the loss of their belongings more frequently.

This bill may address inequity between foster children and their peers who are not in care. A child living with their family is not typically handed a trash bag when the household relocates. By guaranteeing both continued access to belongings and dignified transport during moves, *the bill* extends to foster youth a standard of treatment their non-system peers likely take for granted.

According to the Author

"In California, more than 35,000 children live in the foster care system. When a youth enters foster care, the experience is accompanied by profound mental and emotional trauma that disrupts relationships, schooling, and a child's sense of identity. Placement instability is a significant issue for foster youth, and research shows that unplanned or poorly managed transitions can exacerbate the trauma and loss that children in foster care already experience.

"Across the state, reports have revealed how some foster youth are unable to access their clothing and personal belongings, often forced to wear the same clothes for extended periods, while others experience moves where their belongings are hastily packed into trash bags, with items lost, damaged, or left behind. These practices, both unacceptable and damaging, send a harmful message to foster youth that their belongings, and by extension their identity and experiences, do not matter.

"As dependents of the state, youth in foster care rely upon California to ensure not only their safety, but their dignity. Restricting access to personal items and handling belongings in a manner associated with refuse undermines that obligation. Establishing a clear and enforceable right to reasonable access and dignified transportation of belongings provides foster youth with the dignity they deserve. [This bill] reinforces the responsibility of county welfare agencies to prevent unnecessary trauma, promotes consistent practice across California, and emphasizes that foster youth deserve respect like any other child."

Arguments in Support

Youth Law Center, sponsor, writes, "Research confirms what youth have long told us: stability, continuity, and a strong sense of identity are critical to healthy development. Disruptions to daily stability and lack of access to personal belongings can negatively affect mental health, relationships, and long-term outcomes. Even when placement changes are necessary, the way those transitions are handled, and whether youth can maintain access to their belongings, can either mitigate or compound harm. [This bill] addresses these issues in a targeted and practical way by clarifying that youth have the right to maintain reasonable access to and use of their personal belongings, clothing, and personal items, and that those belongings must be transported in a manner that preserves dignity. This bill establishes a clear standard that aligns policy with developmental science and the lived experience of youth."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee on August 13, 2026, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) estimates one-time General Fund costs of \$453,000 in fiscal year 2027-28. These costs include \$185,000 for one limited-term analyst position in the Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson to oversee updating the Foster Youth Bill of Rights, ensuring accessibility requirements are met, providing tribal review, working with focus groups, updating web content, administering forms, and tracking translations; and \$268,000 to print and distribute updated copies of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

VOTES**SENATE FLOOR: 33-0-7**

YES: Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Ochoa Bogh, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Becker, Hurtado, Niello, Padilla, Stern

ASM HUMAN SERVICES: 7-0-0

YES: Lee, Tangipa, Calderon, Elhawary, Jackson, Celeste Rodriguez, Sanchez

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

VERSION: August 13, 2026

CONSULTANT: Jessica Langtry / HUM. S. / (916) 319-2089

FN: 0003641