



SENATE BILL 5082 / HOUSE BILL 1429

Creating a housing assistance program for youth enrolled in Extended Foster Care.

Young people in the Extended Foster Care program (EFC) – state dependent youth – are homeless. The state has a moral and constitutional obligation to ensure that all young people in its care and custody are, at minimum, housed. This legislation creates a state-funded housing voucher program modeled after the federal Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) program. It is designed specifically for youth in Extended Foster Care (EFC) who are experiencing homelessness. Currently, federal restrictions prevent young adults from accessing both EFC supports and FYI housing vouchers simultaneously. By establishing a state-funded alternative, Washington will fulfill its obligation to ensure housing stability for young people in state care.



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ISSUE & BACKGROUND

CONTEXT

Young adults aged 18-21 in Extended Foster Care (EFC) remain state dependents but are facing homelessness due to inadequate housing support. The state’s Supervised Independent Living (SIL) payment, currently set at just \$861, falls far short of covering rent and basic living expenses in Washington’s high-cost housing market. Compounding this issue, federal housing assistance through the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) program is inaccessible to EFC participants due to restrictive federal regulations, leaving a critical gap in resources.

Washington State has an obligation to address this gap and ensure that dependent young people are housed, providing the stability they need to transition successfully to independence.

KEY PROBLEM

It is unacceptable for young adults who are still state dependents to face homelessness. The state must act to address this systemic failure by closing the housing support gap.

Currently, many youth in extended foster care face an impossible choice: to secure housing, they are forced to exit the program at age 18 to access federal housing vouchers. This decision results in the loss of the vital support and stability that extended foster care provides during a critical period of their lives. Additionally, these young adults prematurely exhaust time-limited federal housing resources that they should be able to access after turning 21, leaving them vulnerable to instability in the future.

“I would have been housed at 18 if I had this, but because I did not, I remained homeless for an additional 3 years. Due to being unhoused my EFC payments were at risk which was my primary source of income, this led to extreme financial insecurity and relationship problems.”
~Corrina, a King County Chapter Leader

“Having secure housing would have alleviated much of the strain and stress I experienced while in Extended Foster Care. With a safe space and financial stability, I would not have been forced into prostitution to meet my basic needs and the stability I so desperately needed.”
~ Lexx, a King County Chapter Leader

DATA

The legislature finds that approximately 13% of young people in extended foster care experienced homelessness in state fiscal year 2024.


IMPACT

The state of Washington has an unequivocal duty to ensure that young adults in EFC are not left without stable housing. This is not a discretionary matter—it is the state's minimum responsibility to care for those it has removed from their families. Housing is a fundamental need, and providing it is essential for these young people to build a foundation for independence and long-term success.




BENEFITS & OUTCOMES


Positive Outcomes:

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- Prevention of homelessness for youth in EFC.
 - Smooth transition into adulthood.
 - Optimized use of state and federal resources for long-term youth success.


Who Benefits:

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- Youth and young adults in the EFC program who experience homelessness.
 - Youth and young adults who are forced to exit extended foster care to access federal housing vouchers would likely return to the EFC program, which is designed specifically for them, as the barriers to access would no longer exist.

Social, Economic, or Public Health Benefits:

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- Reduced homelessness among foster youth aging out of care.
 - Enhanced mental health, economic mobility, and social stability for former foster youth.
 - Long-term state savings by reducing reliance on emergency housing services.

Measurable Results:

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- Fewer EFC youth experiencing homelessness.
 - Increased stability and positive outcomes as reported by EFC participants.
 - Cost savings due to decreased reliance on emergency intervention services.

TAKE ACTION

Immediate action is essential to provide housing stability for EFC youth, safeguarding them from homelessness and promoting long-term success.

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