

SB 5230: Extended Foster Care (EFC)



BILL OVERVIEW:

Extended foster care (EFC) aims to become more accessible and aid young adults in transitioning to independence. This bill will make it as close to an "opt-out" system as possible, increase monthly payments, extend eligibility through age 25, and ensure free legal counsel is provided for youth and young adults.

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT VOICE:

Youth and young adult advocates have been determined to make the Extended Foster Care system more supportive and accessible. They note the challenges of navigating the legal system in order to enroll and receive benefits, while dealing with the stressors of entering adulthood and facing independence. Youth and young adult advocates are inspired- "it's empowering to see change and know things will be better for future generations." Many wished they had these changes in place when they were leaving the system, and continue to work for those coming after them.

BILL SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS:

- Championed by Senator Wilson, LD 43 (King County area)

ACTION STEPS:

- *The Mockingbird Society is preparing to advocate this legislative session for the passage of SB 5230!*
- *Mockingbird will then work with young adults to implement and access the new elements of EFC*

BACKGROUND:

- Extended Foster Care (EFC) exists to help youth and young adults who are dependents of the state transition to independence and adulthood when they turn 18
- Many youth and young adults in foster care are not receiving the support they need while in EFC, with COVID-19 exacerbating struggles
- Due to lack of accessibility and awareness, 20% of foster youth and young adults do not participate in EFC; this is troubling since 17% of foster youth and young adults experience housing instability in their first year out of the system
- Current EFC payments are not enough to support living in King County
- Foster youth and young adults must face courts and go through extensive processes to prove they deserve benefits

IMPACTS:

- The average youth and young adult participating in EFC was more likely to be employed and have greater earnings
- Payments allow foster youth and young adults to afford rent, transportation, food, and education expenses while transitioning to adulthood
- Financial independence allows youth and young adults to gain confidence and build skills while saving for the future
- EFC significantly reduces homelessness, reliance on public assistance, medical emergencies, criminal justice involvement, substance abuse, and more
- Youth and young adults will have legal counsel provided to them at no cost

If you know of any potential community partners or supporters for this topic, please contact Mockingbird's Acting Public Policy Director / Lobbyist at sam@sdmartinconsulting.com