S-0942.1

SENATE BILL 5620

State of Washington 69th Legislature 2025 Regular Session

By Senator Cleveland

AN ACT Relating to codifying the rights of children and youth in foster care; adding a new section to chapter 74.13 RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that young people in foster care will benefit from having a statutory declaration and notification of certain rights. The statutory rights in this section are not intended to limit or supersede other rights afforded to children and youth in foster care. The legislature intends to improve the health, well-being, and safety of children and youth in foster care by declaring these rights.

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 74.13 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The department shall make efforts to ensure provision of the following rights:

(a) The right to dignity and respect regardless of actual or perceived race, ethnicity, culture, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, and freedom from discrimination in accordance with applicable state and federal laws;

(b) Placement with a foster care provider, where necessary, who is aware of and understands the child's or youth's unique history as it relates to the child's or youth's care and who possesses the appropriate knowledge and skills to provide for the child's or youth's needs;

(c) Reasonable connections to the child's or youth's community and supports, including communication and contact with people outside the foster care system who are important to the child or youth, unless otherwise limited by law or court order;

(d) Receipt of a free and appropriate education, access to transportation to educational institutions, and an opportunity to participate in sports and extracurricular, cultural, personal enrichment, and social activities consistent with the child's or youth's age and developmental level, including access to computer technology and the internet as necessary for the child's or youth's education;

(e) Personal belongings including wearing the child's or youth's own clothing, having a safe place to store personal belongings, and having personal belongings transported in appropriate luggage with the child or youth during or shortly after a change of placement; and

(f) When 18 or older and leaving foster care, being provided with the youth's birth certificate, social security card, immigration documents, health insurance information, medical records, education records, either a driver's license or a state-issued identicard, written information including the youth's family history and contact information for siblings, if appropriate, and proof of foster care.

(2) By September 1, 2025, the department shall produce and make available to department staff a pamphlet containing the rights afforded to youth in foster care and the responsibilities of the department. At a minimum, the pamphlet must:

(a) Be concise, but provide references to resources and services available to children and youth in care;

(b) At a minimum, describe the rights as articulated under this chapter as well as any other relevant information; and

(c) Provide information on how to contact caseworkers in an emergency.

(3) The pamphlet required under this section must be made available by the department to all foster youth as they enter care and shall also be published on the department's website.

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