



H.R. 6307 – Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2008

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 6307 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Jim McDermott (D-WA) on June 19, 2008. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means, but was never considered.

H.R. 6307 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on June 24, 2008.

SUMMARY

Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payments: H.R. 6307 provides an option under the current Federal Foster Care and Adoption Assistance program for States to allow payments to relative guardians of children in foster care.

Note: Relative guardians are typically grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins or adult siblings. These relative guardians would have legal responsibility of a child placed in their care through the foster care system. After the child had been in foster care for one year, including at least six months with the relative, a relative could be granted “kinship guardian” status, and – as occurs when children are adopted – direct caseworker oversight of the child as a foster care case would cease. Relatives must undergo a second criminal record check before being granted kinship guardian status for the relative child in their care.

Family Connection Grants: This legislation allows the Secretary of Health and Human Services to make matching grants to public or private organizations which promote connections between family members and children in or at risk of entering the foster care system. The grants may be awarded for a period of between one and three years. The Federal contribution level is 75% for the first and second years of the grant, and 50 percent for the third year.

The bill authorizes \$50 million for each of the fiscal years 2009-2013 for this purpose.

Notification to Relatives of Foster Care Placements: This bill requires States to attempt to locate and notify any non-custodial parent, adult sibling, grandparent, aunt, or uncle of a child placed in foster care within 30 days of removal of a child from his or her home. States are required to explain to relatives available options for participating in the child’s care and placement.

State Option to Extend Federal Payments Until Age 21: H.R. 6307 allows States to extend from 18 to 21 the age through which Federal payments may be made on behalf of a youth in foster care (or for youth who were adopted or placed in kinship guardian homes after attaining age 16). Youth above the age of 18 must be enrolled in school or job training or working at least part-time to be eligible under this section.

Training Child Welfare Workers: This bill increases the matching rate for training private sector child welfare workers from 50% to 70%, to align with the rate at which public sector workers are currently matched. The rate increased is phased over the 2009-2012 period.

Tribal Child Welfare Programs: H.R. 6307 provides direct Federal funding to Native American tribes to administer foster care programs, beginning in fiscal year 2011 at levels under the discretion of the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Tribes must apply and propose a child care plan to the Secretary in order to receive funding.



Health Oversight and Coordination Plan: The bill requires States to develop a plan for the oversight and coordination of health care services provided to children in foster care.

Educational Stability: H.R. 6307 directs States to develop a plan to ensure the educational stability of children in foster care. This provision also specifies that foster care, kinship guardian, and adoption payments may not be made for children under the age of 18 unless the child is enrolled in school, or is incapable of attending school full time due to a medical condition.

Adoption Incentives Program: This provision extends the Adoption Incentives Program, which provides States with bonus funds for increasing adoptions from foster care, through fiscal year 2013. H.R. 6307 also increases the awards for adoptions of children with special needs and older children, from \$2,000 to \$4,000 and \$4,000 to \$8,000 respectively.

Miscellaneous Provisions: The bill directs States to provide information to potentially eligible families regarding Federal adoption tax credits.

To offset costs, H.R. 6307 also allows the Secretary of Treasury to invest operating cash of the Treasury for up to 90 days. In addition, the legislation allows the recovery of unemployment benefits overpayments attributable to fraud through offsetting Federal income tax refunds.

BACKGROUND

According to the Heritage Foundation, foster children tend to have higher rates of absenteeism, tardiness and truancy, as well as lower standardized test scores, when compared to the general population. In addition, youth who age out of foster care have only a 35% chance of finishing high school and a 60% chance of being unemployed. These youths also are twice as likely as their peers to have a child outside of marriage. Only 20% of foster children attend college, compared to 60% of the general college-age population.

In the United States, foster home requirements vary considerably at the State level and are generally overseen by each State's Department of Social Services or Human Services. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services oversees each State's foster care system, through HHS' Administration for Children and Families (ACF). State compliance with federal requirements is determined primarily by the Child and Family Services Review of ACF. Most federal assistance dedicated to child welfare is included in Title IV of the Social Security Act. Programs authorized under this provision provide funds for a range of child welfare services, including family support and preservation to foster care, adoption support and independent living.

[Department of Health and Human Services - Administration for Children and Families](#)

COST

The Congressional Budget Office had not produced a cost estimate for H.R. 6307 as of June 23, 2008.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Adam Hepburn at (202) 226-2302.