Parenting Foster Youth
AB 260 (Lopez)
Fact Sheet

BACKGROUND

Currently, there are more than 63,000 foster youth in California.[1] These youth are removed and taken out of their homes for causes related to abuse and/or neglect. After being placed into the foster care system, they often struggle with overcoming trauma while also attempting to succeed despite statistically poorer outcomes.

As a unique subpopulation in foster care, parenting youth encounter a specific set of challenges. Not only are these dependents still working toward their own goals and successful transition to independence, but they are also faced with raising a child. Although the recent passage of federal law H.R. 4980 now requires the state to track data for this demographic, our knowledge and view currently remain limited.[2]

However, a recent study surveying 17-year olds in extended foster care found that 26 percent of respondents had been pregnant at least once, compared to a significantly lower rate of 2.8 percent for general populations teens. The results also showed that a quarter of parenting foster youth had at least one child who was a dependent of the court, thus demonstrating a troubling cycle of entrance into foster care.[3]

One report released in 2013 analyzed CPS data along with California birth records to calculate population estimates for parenting foster youth. Researchers found that more than one in three young women in foster care will have given birth by age 21. Furthermore, almost 40 percent of those teen parents will have a repeat birth according to their findings.[4]

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[1]http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/PIT.aspx
[2]https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/4980/text
[3]http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Youth%20Report.pdf, 2014 (pg. 60)
[4]http://www.hiltonfoundation.org/images/stories/PriorityAreas/FosterYouth/Downloads/Vulnerable_Parents_vol._1-2.pdf (pg.4)

SUMMARY

Without the necessary network of support in place, the added pressure of raising a child can potentially both stall a youth's transition to adulthood as well as result in their children ending up in the foster care system themselves. Given the higher proportion of foster youth becoming parents, it is crucial that they receive the targeted support they need in order to accomplish their personal, educational, or professional goals while still being able to raise their children themselves.

Nevertheless, parenting youth are among the "most vulnerable" in dependency proceedings that could result in their child being taken from them due to the "heightened level of scrutiny" they face by nature of living within the foster care system.[5]

This legislation aims to address these issues by shielding certain information in a parenting youth's case file from an inappropriate level of scrutiny as well as ensuring preventative services are available in all placement settings prior to the initiation of dependency proceedings.

THIS BILL

- Adds Welfare and Institutions (WIC) code sections 361.8 and 825.5 to discourage the inappropriate use of outdated or irrelevant information in any effort to remove a child from the care of a parenting foster youth

- Amends WIC 16002.5 to ensure preventative support services are offered to a parenting foster youth regardless of what placement setting the youth lives in

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[5] http://www.cfrny.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Protection-v.-Presentment-Shriver-Center-Jan.-2012.pdf, 2012 (pg. 426)

SUPPORT

California Youth Connection (Sponsor)
Alliance for Children's Rights
American Civil Liberties Union of California
(ACLU)
American Federation of State, County and
Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
Children Now
Disability Rights California
Family Law Section of the State Bar
(FLEXCOM)
Hillsides
John Burton Foundation
National Center for Youth Law
Public Counsel

OPPOSITION

None at this time

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