

SUBJECT: Documenting cost factors in placements of foster children with relatives

COMMITTEE: Human Services — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Rose, S. King, J. Davis, Eissler, Herrero, Naishtat, Pierson

0 nays

2 absent — Hughes, Parker

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 12 — 31-0 on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: Under Family Code, sec. 264.755, the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), when placing a foster child with a relative or other designated caregiver, must provide a one-time cash payment of not more than \$1,000 to the caregiver on the initial placement of a child or a sibling group. This is provided to assist the caregiver in purchasing essential child-care items such as furniture and clothing.

The DFPS also can provide up to \$500 per year per child as reimbursement for other expenses, including child care and counseling.

DIGEST: SB 723 would require DFPS to record each instance in which a placement was not made simply because the relative or designated caregiver could not afford to care for the child. If possible, the department would have to document the amount of monetary assistance and reimbursement to which the caregiver would be entitled and the amount of assistance that would have made the placement affordable for the caregiver.

The DFPS would compile statistics based on this information and report annually to the Legislature regarding proposed placements that were not made in the preceding year due to financial reasons. This report could be made in conjunction with other reports that DFPS is required to submit to the Legislature.

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The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2007 and would apply only to placements proposed on or after this date.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 723 would generate better data about situations in which relatives or designated caregivers, also called “kincare providers,” would like to accept a relative as a foster child but cannot afford to do so. Under the current system, skincare providers receive no more than a one-time payment of \$1,000 and a yearly stipend of \$500 per child.

During the upcoming biennium, reimbursement rates may be examined as part of an interim committee charge on kinship care. The information collected and reported by DFPS would allow the agency and the Legislature to better understand whether there is a need to increase the kinship care provider subsidy and, if so, by how much.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.