

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/CS/SB 272 — Children and Young Adults in Out-of-home Care

by Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services; Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee; and Senators Garcia, Osgood, Perry, Book, and Berman

The bill is cited as the “Nancy C. Detert Champion for Children Act.” The bill makes several changes to statutes that enhance support for children and young adults who are currently or have formerly been in out-of-home care. The bill requires case managers and other staff to provide children in out-of-home care certain education and information about topics, rights, policies, and procedures related to their protection and safety. The bill also requires the DCF to consult with these youth when creating or revising any print or digital information used to educate and inform these youth to ensure the information is understandable and age-appropriate.

The bill establishes the Office of the Children’s Ombudsman within the DCF and details the role of that office. Additionally, the bill requires case managers and other child welfare professionals to ensure that youth in out-of-home care receive information and education about certain topics related to laws, expectations, and goals of the out-of-home care system.

The bill also expands eligibility for the Keys to Independence program that removes barriers for foster and former foster youth to obtain a driver’s license. The bill removes the criteria for a youth that is in a specified program, to have also been in licensed care upon his or her 18th birthday. This change will allow approximately 450 additional young adults to be eligible to participate in the Keys program.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2023.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 116-0