

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/HB 7013 — Adoption and Foster Care

by Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee; Health and Human Services Committee; and Rep. Brodeur (CS/SB 320 by Fiscal Policy Committee; and Senators Gaetz, Clemens, and Sobel)

The bill makes changes to current law to increase the number of adoptions of children from foster care. The bill creates a program to award incentive payments to community-based care lead agencies (CBCs) and their subcontractors for achieving specified adoption performance standards.

The bill also re-creates a program to provide an additional adoption benefit of either \$5,000 or \$10,000, depending on whether the adopted child has special needs as defined in statute, to employees of state agencies, state universities, community colleges, and school districts who adopt a child from the child welfare system. The benefit is available for adoptions finalized on or after July 1, 2015.

The bill requires the Department of Children and Families to prioritize the educational stability of foster children and include homeschooling as one of several educational options.

The bill requires that, 1 year after a child's adoption is finalized, the community-based care lead agency make a reasonable effort to contact the family as a post-adoption service. The agency is required to document factors related to the follow up.

The bill requires the Governor to select and recognize one or more individuals, families, or entities that have made significant contributions to the adoption of children from foster care each year. Recognition awards will be paid by the direct support organization of the Office of Adoption and Child Protection.

The bill also requires child-placing agencies conducting intercountry adoption to maintain certain records and comply with federal requirements regarding the Hague Convention, an international agreement to establish safeguards to ensure that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child.

The fiscal impact of the bill is contingent upon funding being available for the incentive payments to CBCs and the adoption benefit program for qualifying employees of state agencies who adopt a child from the child welfare system.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2015.

Vote: Senate 27-11; House 68-50