

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. DOES THE BILL:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Reduce government? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Lower taxes? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Expand individual freedom? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Increase personal responsibility? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Empower families? | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |

For any principle that received a “no” above, please explain:

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Section 409.1451, F.S., provides a framework for the DCF to administer an independent living program for older children in foster care and young adults who exit foster care at age 18 make the transition to self-sufficiency. The current components of the law are: pre-independent-living services for ages 13 to 15; life skills services for ages 15 to 18; subsidized independent living services for ages 16 and 17; and aftercare support services, Road to Independence Scholarship and transitional support services for ages 18 to 23.

Public Law 106-169, the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, provides flexible funding to states to design and conduct independent living programs. This federal program allows states to determine the minimum age for program participation and funding and sets the maximum age for funding at 21. The program also limits the use of federal funds for room and board to young adults 18 to 21 years of age. State funds must be used for services for young adults ages 21 and 22.

HB 1325 provides for three major revisions to s. 409.1451, F.S.

Children with developmental disabilities or special mental health needs. The bill provides for counselors to be specifically trained in assisting children with developmental disabilities or special mental health needs to transition to independence. It also requires that counselors with specialized training be assigned to work with this population of children.

Eligibility for young adults formerly in foster care. The bill amends the overall eligibility criteria for young adults set forth in s. 409.1451(2)(a), F. S. Young adults are not required to participate in specific educational programs in order to qualify for these services. The current eligibility requirements in the Road to Independence Scholarship already include educational requirements¹ Accordingly, this provision potentially restricts adults’ eligibility for aftercare and transitional support services.

The bill amends the eligibility criteria for participation in life skills activities to include adults meeting specific educational requirements. The elements of this section in existing law relate to children. Eligibility for adults for similar life skill activities is set forth in ss. 409.1451(5)(a) and (c), F.S. The current law does not require participation in specific educational programs for young adults to receive these services; thus, this language may limit the services a young adult may be eligible to receive.

The bill expands the pool of eligible young adults for the Road to Independence Scholarship. Currently, a young adult formerly in foster care must be approved for his/her initial award prior to age 21. The bill provides for eligibility for children who exit foster care within 6 months of his/her 18th birthday rather than for those who exit foster care on his/her 18th birthday. The revisions clarifying scholarship

¹Section 409.1451(2)(a), F.S.

eligibility for those young adults attending special education or adult education programs do not impact the pool of eligible students. The language clarifies the meaning of the existing statutory language regarding special education or adult education programs.

Young Adults Receiving Transitional Support Services Eligible for Medicaid: The bill expands eligibility criteria for transitional support services to children who are in foster care within 6 months of their 18th birthday. Currently, the law requires that a child be in foster care on his/her 18th birthday. The bill provides that young adults age 18 up to age 23 who receive transitional support services are eligible for Medicaid benefits. There is no federal authority to provide Medicaid benefits for 21 or 22 year old adults formerly in foster care.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Amends s. 409.1451, F.S., relating to independent living transition services; requires each DCF district identify adolescent foster children with developmental disabilities or special mental health needs; requires assignment of independent living counselor; expands eligibility requirements for participation in independent living transition services, the Road to Independence Scholarship program, and transitional support services; authorizes Medicaid coverage to persons eligible for transitional support services through age 23.

Section 2: Provides for an effective date of July 1, 2003.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

DCF estimates an annual fiscal impact from this bill of \$5.4 million. Please see "Fiscal Comments" below.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

DCF advises as follows:

Curriculum development costs [for the specialized caseworkers required to counsel adolescent foster children with developmental disabilities or special mental health needs] are based on \$1000 per hour to develop training. Between July 1, 2002 and the present, 2243 children in foster care were identified as having developmental disabilities or special mental health needs. An estimated 14 training sessions will be required statewide at a cost of \$1000 per day of training equals \$14,000. Total - \$20,000

The Medicaid costs are based an estimated number of young adults formerly in foster care who would be potentially eligible for this benefit. The estimated number potentially eligible is 1390 young adults multiplied by \$200 per month cost multiplied by 12 months. The \$200 per month cost for Medicaid was provided by AHCA. Total \$3,336,000

The increase in Road to Independence Scholarships are based on a report that was run from the HomeSafenet system which identified 196 children between the ages of 17 ½ and 18 who exited care between July 1, 2002 and the present. This number, 196 was multiplied by the amount of the award of \$892 per month and then multiplied by 12 months. Total \$2,097,984

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

None.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

The effective date of this bill is July 1, 2003. DCF reports that there will be insufficient time for it to implement the changes required by this bill.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES