

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 843
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Human Services
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Department of Family and Protective Services is currently responsible for providing a youth in foster care assistance in transitioning to independent living after aging out of the system. There is concern that this transition planning does not provide adequate guidance on how to secure housing and that, without minimum standards regarding supportive housing planning, transitional living services can become ineffectual. Research indicates that without stable and secure housing, youths who age out of foster care are more likely to experience homelessness, which is not only a barrier to completing education or maintaining consistent employment but also puts youths at a greater risk of being targeted for human trafficking and increases the likelihood of engaging in survival behaviors that can have lifelong consequences. C.S.H.B. 843 seeks to ensure that certain youths aging out of foster care have the support and guidance they need to build a successful life.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 843 amends the Family Code to require the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to ensure that the transition plan provided to each youth 16 years of age or older under DFPS conservatorship to assist the youth in transitioning from foster care to independent living includes provisions to assist the youth in managing the youth's housing needs after the youth leaves foster care. The bill requires the included provisions to identify the cost of housing in relation to the youth's sources of income, including any benefits or rental assistance available to the youth; if the youth's housing goals include residing with family or friends, to state that DFPS has addressed with the youth certain logistical, emotional, and psychological factors regarding the arrangement; to inform the youth about emergency shelters and housing resources; to require DFPS to review a common rental application with the youth and ensure that the youth possesses all of the documentation required to obtain rental housing; and to identify any individuals who are able to serve as cosigners or references on the youth's applications for housing.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2015.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 843 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following comparison is organized and formatted in a manner that indicates the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

INTRODUCED

SECTION 1. Section 264.121, Family Code, is amended by adding Subsection (i) to read as follows:

(i) The department shall ensure that each youth's transition plan includes a housing stability plan that:

(1) identifies the cost of housing in relation to the youth's sources of income, including any benefits or rental assistance available to the youth;

(2) identifies any housing agreement that the youth has entered into with family or friends and ensures that in making the agreement the youth has considered:

(A) the length of time the youth expects to stay in the housing arrangement;

(B) expectations for the youth regarding paying rent and meeting other household obligations;

(C) the youth's psychological and emotional needs, as applicable; and

(D) any potential conflicts with other household members, or any difficulties connected to the type of housing the youth is seeking, that may arise based on the youth's psychological and emotional needs;

(3) informs the youth about emergency shelters and housing resources;

(4) ensures that the youth understands a common rental application and possesses all of the documentation required to successfully obtain rental housing; and

(5) identifies any individuals who are able to serve as cosigners or references on the youth's applications for housing.

SECTION 2. This Act takes effect September 1, 2015.

HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

SECTION 1. Section 264.121, Family Code, is amended by adding Subsection (i) to read as follows:

(i) The department shall ensure that the transition plan for each youth 16 years of age or older includes provisions to assist the youth in managing the youth's housing needs after the youth leaves foster care, including provisions that:

(1) identify the cost of housing in relation to the youth's sources of income, including any benefits or rental assistance available to the youth;

(2) if the youth's housing goals include residing with family or friends, state that the department has addressed the following with the youth:

(A) the length of time the youth expects to stay in the housing arrangement;

(B) expectations for the youth regarding paying rent and meeting other household obligations;

(C) the youth's psychological and emotional needs, as applicable; and

(D) any potential conflicts with other household members, or any difficulties connected to the type of housing the youth is seeking, that may arise based on the youth's psychological and emotional needs;

(3) inform the youth about emergency shelters and housing resources, including supervised independent living and housing at colleges and universities, such as dormitories;

(4) require the department to review a common rental application with the youth and ensure that the youth possesses all of the documentation required to obtain rental housing; and

(5) identify any individuals who are able to serve as cosigners or references on the youth's applications for housing.

SECTION 2. Same as introduced version.