

- SUBJECT:** Providing certain documents for children aging out of foster care
- COMMITTEE:** Human Services — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Rose, Herrero, Darby, Hernandez, Hughes, Legler, Naishtat, Walle
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — Elkins
- WITNESSES:** For — Key Richardson; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Constance Barker, De Pelchin Children's Center; Jane Burstain, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Lauren DeWitt, Citizens Commission on Human Rights; Christine Gendron, Texas Network of Youth Services; Nancy Holman, Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services; Noelita Lugo, Texans Care for Children; Diana Martinez, TexProtects; Johana Scot, Parent Guidance Center; M. Madison Sloan, Texas Appleseed; Andrea Sparks, Texas CASA; Monica Thyssen, Advocacy, Inc.)
- Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** Family Code, sec. 264.014 requires the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to provide a child “aging out” of foster care with certain documents within 30 days of the date the child is discharged from foster care. These documents include birth certificate, immunization records, and the information contained in the child's health passport.
- Transportation Code, ch. 521 provides the guidelines for obtaining a driver's license or personal identification certificate from the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS).
- DIGEST:** CSHB 705 would amend Family Code, sec. 264.014 to require DFPS also to provide to foster children aging out of the system:
- a personal identification certificate under Transportation Code, ch. 521;

- a social security card or a replacement social security card; and
- proof of enrollment in Medicaid, if appropriate.

In addition, the department would be required to provide all documents to youths within 30 days before the date of discharge.

The bill would require DFPS, in cooperation with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and DPS, to develop a plan to ensure that each foster child in permanent managing conservatorship would be provided the opportunity to complete a driver's education course and to obtain a driver's license before the child left conservatorship.

DFPS would provide a report to the Legislature no later than December 1, 2010, which would include program cost estimates and methods for obtaining affordable liability insurance.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2009, and would apply to any child in the conservatorship of DFPS on or after the effective date.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 705 would ensure that youths aging out of foster care have the essential documents they need to function and be successful as adults.

The bill also would require that DFPS provide an opportunity for foster youth to complete a driver's education course. Texas is a state largely without mass transit, so individuals without a driver's license can be at a tremendous disadvantage. At a minimum, photo identification is required for a variety of life situations, such as employment and housing and applying for utility services. The bill would ensure that foster youth had the opportunity to obtain these forms of DPS documentation before aging out.

CSHB 705 would provide vital documentation to foster children before exiting the system, rather than after. It also would provide additional documents that are essential in order to function and operate in today's society. Foster youth aging out of the system face many challenges to independent living, and the lack of essential documentation magnifies the challenges. CSHB 705 would ensure that foster youth had access to birth certificates, social security cards, and photo identification to aid them as they endeavor to begin their adult lives.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The substitute bill differs from the original in that it changed the driver's education and driver's license program requirement for DFPS, TEA, and DPS to include only those children in permanent managing conservatorship rather than those in conservatorship.

The companion bill, SB 983 by Davis, passed the Senate by 31-0 on April 16 and was reported favorably, without amendment, by the House Human Services Committee on April 30, making it eligible for consideration in lieu of HB 705.