Bill No.: HB-5682
AN ACT CONCERNING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION EXPENSES FOR CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS ADOPTED THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FOSTER CARE
Title: PROGRAM.
Vote Date: 3/12/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 2/14/2019
File No.: 

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Committee on Children

REASONS FOR BILL:
To mandate the Commissioner of Children and Families to change the policy of the Department of Children and Families regarding financial assistance for post-secondary expenses by broadening the provision of assistance to individuals adopted through the Department on or after January 1, 2001.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
Sarah Eagan, State Child Advocate, Office of the Child Advocate:
The child advocate expressed her support for this bill. She mentioned that the Department of Children and Families (DCF) currently provide education benefits to children adopted after December 31, 2004. This bill broadens the requirement to mandate DCF to provide these benefits to children adopted after December 31, 2002. She believes that these education benefits are necessary in promoting the healing process of children who have suffered trauma in their early lives.

Vannessa Dorantes, Commissioner, Department of Children and Families:
The commissioner expressed her opposition to this bill. She mentioned that by requiring the Department of Children and Families to provide education expenses of children who are adopted through the Department, the legislature is placing a financial burden on the Department. It is estimated that these expenses would cost approximately $4 million annually. These education benefits would be made available to only youth adopted from
foster care. If DCF had to provide education benefits to all children adopted through the department this would place an even greater burden on the department.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Margaret Doherty, Connecticut Alliance of Foster & Adoptive Families:
Margaret expressed her support for this bill. She mentioned that most children adopted through the Department of Children and Families do not continue their education after high school. Many of these families cannot afford to pay for college expenses. For these reasons she urges the committee to support this bill.

Deb Kelleher, Annie C. Courtney Foundation:
Deb expressed her support for this bill. She urged the committee to move this bill forward as it will bring new opportunities to children who were adopted through the Department of Children and Families. This foundation provides support to foster and adoptive families. Deb expressed that this bill would help these families with education costs.

Deborah Kelleher:
Deborah expressed her support for this bill. She mentioned that all three of her adopted boys do not qualify for education benefits under current law. She expressed that many families who adopt children through the Department of Children and families are not wealthy, and they can’t afford to send their children to college. She believes that this bill would provide opportunities for struggling families.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

See response from administration/agency.

Reported by:  Peter Murszewski Date: 03/18/2019