

Senate Bill 245

Protecting Foster Youth

Senator Connie M. Leyva (D-Chino)

SUMMARY

Senate Bill 245 would decrease the rate of unintended pregnancy among foster youth in California by improving access to comprehensive sexual health education, ensuring that the current reproductive rights of foster youth are met, and training child welfare personnel on reproductive health topics using a statewide curriculum.

BACKGROUND

While the rate of unintended pregnancy among teens and young adults in the United States has reached a 30-year low, this reduction has not been experienced by youth in foster care.

Recently conducted research in California paints a stark picture of the reproductive realities for California foster youth:

- 52% of California female foster youth have been pregnant at least once by age 19, a number almost 3 times higher than that of youth not in foster care.
- More than two-thirds of these young women describe their pregnancies as unintended.
- By age 21, over 1 in 3 young women in foster care will give birth.
- Of female foster youth who give birth before age 18, 40% will have a second birth by age 21.

PROBLEM

The high rate of unintended pregnancy and early child birth has serious long-term implications. For foster youth, early child-bearing significantly diminishes their likelihood of lifelong economic stability. The children of foster youth oftentimes also suffer the consequences of unintended pregnancy: they are 300 percent more likely to have a substantiated report of abuse by age 5 than children born to same-age mothers who were not in foster care.

SOLUTION

SB 245 would provide California's foster youth with the opportunity to achieve long-term economic security by

decreasing the rate of unintended pregnancy through four provisions:

- Ensure foster youth aged 12 and older receive periodic comprehensive sexual health education that meets requirements set forth on the California Education Code and document its receipt in the youth's case plan.
- Ensure the existing reproductive rights of foster youth are met by documenting annually how the child welfare agency ensures the youth has access to age-appropriate, medically accurate information on puberty, reproductive and sexual health care, the prevention of unintended pregnancies, and the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of Sexually Transmitted Infections.
- Develop a statewide curriculum on the reproductive rights of foster youth, the documentation of sensitive health information in the case plan, the role of the social worker and caregiver in ensuring youth obtain sexual and reproductive health services, how to talk to youth about sexual and reproductive health and information contraception and referral resources.
- Train social workers, judges, licensed foster parents, relative caregivers, group home personnel and personnel working for foster family agencies on the content included in the statewide curriculum.

SUPPORT

John Burton Advocates for Youth (Co-Sponsor)
National Center for Youth Law (Co-Sponsor)
Children's Law Center of Los Angeles (Co-Sponsor)

STATUS

Introduced February 6, 2017

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