



AB 1735 – Eliminating Language Barriers for Foster Youth

SUMMARY

This bill would ensure that youth in foster care who speak a primary language other than English receive translated essential court documents such as notices, court reports, and case plans so that they are able to meaningfully participate in their case.

BACKGROUND

Under *Welfare & Institutions Code § 16001.9*, the Foster Youth Bill of Rights, children and non-minor dependents in foster care are guaranteed the right to view and receive copies of child welfare records and to be involved in the development of their own case plan.

California has more immigrants than any other state and is home to a large number of immigrant children. There are over 60,000 children and non-minor dependents in the state's foster care system and over half come from a Latinx or Asian background. Los Angeles County makes up for nearly half of the foster youth in the state with over 30,000 youth in the system. Of these 30,000, approximately 900 are immigrant youth. In LA alone, 120 of the 600 foster youth of Asian descent list a primary language other than English.

PROBLEM

There is no legal requirement that courts translate critical child welfare documents for youth in foster care who speak a primary language other than English. As a result, there are youth in foster care who are navigating and participating in the system without a full grasp on the details of their own court case. Courts and attorneys provide reports and ask these foster youth to develop and sign documents and case plans that they cannot fully comprehend. They do not have the language access to understand the goals set forth in their case plans, transition to independent living plans, and a number of other services that they are entitled to and should be receiving.

SOLUTION

AB 1735 would strengthen existing rights and address language barriers for foster youth who speak a primary language other than English by:

- Requiring that a child or non-minor dependent in foster care be provided a copy of court reports, their case plan, and their transitional independent living plan (TILP) in a language the youth understands; and
- Requiring that the Foster Youth Bill of Rights be translated and provided to youth in a language that they understand.

This bill would align child welfare law with other areas of law, such as those related to regional center and special education services, where agencies are already required to translate documents into a language that the youth and their families can comprehend. It would also bring dependency courts to parity with trial courts, which already provide translated forms and materials for other areas of the law, such as civil law, criminal law, family law, and probate law.

SUPPORT

Children's Law Center of California (Co-sponsor)
Legal Services for Children (Co-sponsor)
Law Foundation of Silicon Valley (Co-sponsor)
Children's Legal Services of San Diego (Co-sponsor)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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