ENROLLED

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 282

Requesting the Department of Social Services to develop and present options for implementing the extension of foster care maintenance and adoption assistance payments for individuals up to 21 years of age. Report.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 5, 2013
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 19, 2013

WHEREAS, foster care maintenance payments provide financial assistance to foster families providing care for children placed in foster homes by a local department of social services or licensed child-placing agency following removal of a child from his or her own home; and

WHEREAS, adoption assistance payments facilitate adoptive placements and ensure permanency for children with special needs by providing financial assistance to families who adopt a qualifying child; and

WHEREAS, foster care maintenance ends when a child reaches the age of 18, or the age of 19 if the child is completing secondary education, and adoption assistance also ends when a child reaches the age of 18, unless the child has a disability warranting continuation of assistance, in which case assistance may be provided until the individual reaches the age of 21; and

WHEREAS, federal law permits states to extend foster care maintenance and adoption assistance payments funded through federal programs until the qualifying former foster child or adopted person reaches the age of 21; and

WHEREAS, extending foster care maintenance and adoption assistance payments to allow payments to be made until the former foster child or adopted person reaches the age of 21 may improve placement rates, provide greater permanency, and lead to better outcomes for foster children and children with special needs who are adopted; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Department of Social Services be requested to develop and present options for implementing the extension of foster care maintenance and adoption assistance payments for individuals up to 21 years of age.

In developing options for the extension of foster care maintenance and adoption assistance payments for individuals up to 21 years of age, the Department of Social Services shall review state and federal law and regulations governing foster care maintenance and adoption subsidy payments, meet with stakeholders to identify and evaluate options, and develop a plan for implementation of a program of foster care maintenance and adoption subsidy payments to age 21, which shall include specific proposals for legislative, regulatory, and budgetary actions necessary to implement such program.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department of Social Services, upon request.

The Department of Social Services shall complete its work by November 30, 2013, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the 2014 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.