

Assembly Bill 2552 – Clothing Allowance for ARC Families

Assemblymember Chris R. Holden

SUMMARY

Assembly Bill 2552 reinstates a clothing allowance for families who have adopted a child through the Approved Relative Caregiver program.

Background

The Approved Relative Caregiver (ARC) program was enacted in 2014 as a way to provide a funding option for families who do not qualify for the Aid to Families with Dependent Children--Foster Care (AFDC-FC). While many youths adopted through the foster care system qualify for AFDC-FC funds, there are some who do not qualify due to unique family living situations or technicalities with their federal application for funding. Counties that participate in the program can opt-in and opt-out at any time, as long as they comply with state law in proceeding with their actions.

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Act (CalWORKs) provides funding for a variety of public and social service opportunities. At a minimum, foster children living in California are eligible for CalWORKs funding to be collected by their adoptive parent or guardian. Participants in the ARC program are typically eligible for either CalWORKs or the ARC payment, whichever is greater and if they qualify. The ARC payment is still made available to the family if they do not qualify for CalWORKs.

Upon relinquishing parental rights and the custody of a child, an extensive process is put into motion, in order to find the most appropriate location and caregiver to care for the child. Both United States Law¹ and California Law² agree that a relative, whether they are close or extended members of the family, are the most logical options for continuing to raise the child. Identifying a preference for placing a child with a relative illustrates a policy objective that understands the overall benefit of keeping a family together and in a reliable environment.

In addition, there are potential cost savings in placing a child with an ARC. According to an article for Southern California Public radio, “the average child in foster care... costs the county anywhere from \$20,568 to \$23,724.”³ In contrast, The Alliance for Children’s Rights projects the average 15-year old to receive less than half of the average child in foster care.⁴ The additional allowance to pay for the child’s clothing and other accessorial costs to adjusting would go a long way to ensuring the success of the placement and the comfort of the new environment.

Existing Law:

Welfare and Institutions Code §11200-11218:

Establishes the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Act (CalWORKs), in compliance with the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

Welfare and Institutions Code §11400-11410:

Outlines the state’s Aid to Families with Dependent Children--Foster Care (AFDC-FC) definitions, requirements, and payment obligations.

Welfare and Institutions Code §11461.3:

- Establishes the Approved Relative Caregiver program and specifies that children who do not qualify for AFDC-FC federal funding can receive a funding amount equal to the rate of funding potentially available through AFDC-FC.
- Describes the requirements for a county to participate in the program, such as providing an approval process and the funding options available to both the county and the ARC participant family. Allows counties to opt-in and opt-out, with certain requirements.

³ *LA County’s most vulnerable foster children are having trouble finding homes.* Palta, Rita. 24 April, 2014. Southern California Public Radio.

⁴ *Understanding the Approved Relative Caregiver Funding Option Program.* Alliance for Children’s Rights, in partnership with the California Department of Social Services, et al.

¹ 42 USC §671(a)(15)(A)

² Welfare and Institutions Code § 361.3

- States that ARC participants are not eligible for additional clothing allowances, among other restrictions.

THE SOLUTION

Assembly Bill 2552 reinstates a clothing allowance and makes it specifically available to families participating in the Approved Relative Caregiver program. The Clothing Allowance would consist of an additional \$240 a year for three years, distributed monthly, in counties that have opted into the program.

Support/Opposition

Support:

Opposition:

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