



ASSEMBLYWOMAN

Blanca E. Rubio

DISTRICT 48

AB 1602 (Rubio): Foster youth: disaster aid assistance.

SUMMARY

AB 1602 will establish a statewide Child Welfare Disaster Response Fund to ensure grants and resources are immediately available to disaster-impacted communities. This fund will mitigate the urgent needs of children and youth in foster care and their caregivers, including transportation, interim housing, and replacement of essential belongings.

BACKGROUND

While everyone struggles in the face of natural disasters, children and youth in foster care and their caregivers deal with a unique set of challenges after a fire, flood or earthquake.

The state is legally responsible for meeting the needs of children and youth in foster care, which is particularly critical in the wake of a natural disaster before long-term assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) comes through.

Despite the state's legal responsibility to these children and youth, they rarely receive the funding needed to cover extra, unexpected costs, including replacing lost belongings, securing temporary housing, or traveling to and from a temporary home to appointments and school.

Without critical support when stressors are heightened and resources are stretched thin, previously stable homes and living situations can sometimes disrupt, causing further trauma and instability for children in foster care. When foster families are evacuated or displaced, it becomes extremely challenging to enforce rights aimed at creating stability, nurturing important relationships, and minimizing further disruptions for children in foster care, all of which can compound the trauma children and youth experienced prior to the disaster.

To mitigate these challenges, foster families and transition age youth in foster care must have access to dedicated resources to help them survive and rebuild.

PROBLEM

What current financial disaster assistance exists for Foster Youth?

There is currently no dedicated financial disaster assistance for foster youth or foster families. In 2021, the Child Welfare Services Disaster Planning and Response Unit (DPRU) was established to provide non-monetary support for help accessing resources from within their county of residence.

Both the Palisades and Eaton fires decimated approximately 11,500 properties, leaving many foster families and youth displaced and vulnerable. Research from the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families found that following the Eaton Fire, 225 children involved with the child welfare system were impacted, and within three months 17% had been forced to relocate, disrupting placements and schooling.

Foster youth already experience instability, and disasters further disrupt placements, education, and access to essential services. Likewise, foster parents may struggle to recover without dedicated assistance. By prioritizing emergency housing and recovery resources for foster youth and families, AB 1602 helps ensure continuity of care during crises.

SOLUTION

This bill will establish support for children and youth in foster care and their caregivers by ensuring grants and resources are immediately available post-disaster to impacted communities including for transportation and interim housing and to replace essential belongings.

SUPPORT

Children Now (**Sponsor**)

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