

DCYF Agency Request Legislation

Parent Pay Repeal

The proposed bill would repeal **RCW 13.40.220**, Washington’s “Parent Pay” statute, which charges families for their child’s incarceration.

The current law requires parents to pay a percentage of their gross income to DCYF for the cost of their child’s support, treatment, and confinement in Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) residential facilities.

The Parent Pay statute essentially operates as a Legal Financial Obligation assessed on parents for their child’s incarceration. It disproportionately impacts low-income families and represents a dated policy and philosophy that is not aligned with current racial equity and social justice reforms.

Pursuing these parents is unfair and takes advantage of people at their most vulnerable, undermining government credibility and the integrity of the legal process. Placing these parents in debt may also result in unstable home environments, deterring successful youth reentry into the community.

“ It puts families at risk. They’re going to garnish [wages]. You don’t have a choice on how much to pay or when to pay. You have to choose between vehicle, rent, food – something has to go if you’re going to pay it. It impacts the whole family in a negative way. ”

– Parent of a youth in care

What the bill does:

- Repeals **RCW 13.40.220** (the Parent Pay statute).
- Cancels outstanding parent debts.
- Ends pending legal or administrative proceedings against parents.
- Provides outstanding debts reported to a collection agency are to be recalled, terminated, and considered paid in full.
- Provides that moneys already collected before the effective date will not be refunded.

DCYF Strategic Priority Alignment

Eliminating parents’ financial obligation to pay for their child’s incarceration will advance racial equity and help support a successful transition to adulthood for young people in the agency’s care.

The Fiscal Note included reflects the amount budgeted per biennium (\$1,893,000 GFS) of which roughly a quarter of this is collected from parents of youth in JR residential facilities each year.

Note: This bill does not amend or repeal the County Detention Parent Pay statute, **RCW 13.16.085**, and is not intended to limit the ability of the counties to collect payments for children placed in any detention facility under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court.

If you would like copies of this document in an alternative format or language, please contact DCYF Constituent Relations (1-800-723-4831 | 360-902-8060, ConstRelations@dcyf.wa.gov).

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