# STATE OF NEW YORK

5536

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

# IN ASSEMBLY

February 14, 2025

Introduced by M. of A. JACKSON -- read once and referred to the Committee on Children and Families

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to increasing salaries for foster care direct care workers; and making an appropriation therefor

**The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:**

Section 1. Legislative findings. The legislature finds that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the child welfare workforce within the foster care system. Direct care workers have continued to come to work every day throughout the pandemic, care for our most vulnerable children, and are part of our essential workforce. While other essential workers have been recognized or provided enhanced salary payments, direct care workers in the child welfare system have not. Moreover, the agencies that employ the foster care workforce have been historically underfunded and as a result the compensation provided to workers does not provide a living wage.

Therefore, the legislature proposes salaries for direct care workers be increased starting with the 2025-2026 rate year and continued for the following two years. This investment will help stabilize the current turnover and vacancy rates within the direct care workforce which will have a positive and beneficial impact on children in the foster care system.

§ 2. Section 398-a of the social services law is amended by adding a new subdivision 2-d to read as follows:

**(2-d) Payments made directly by social service districts to voluntary foster care agencies to increase employee salaries during each of the two thousand twenty-five--two thousand twenty-six, two thousand twenty-six--two thousand twenty-seven, and two thousand twenty-seven--two thousand twenty-eight rate years shall be supported by increased funding available through the foster care block grant. Such payments shall be**

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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**used to increase the salaries of foster care agency employees, including, but not limited to, direct care staff, caseworkers, and case planners, as well as the salaries of such workers' supervisors working in such foster care agencies.**

§ 3. The sum of seventeen million dollars ($17,000,000), or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated to the state insurance fund out of any moneys in the state treasury in the general fund to the credit of the state purpose account, not otherwise appropriated, and made immediately available for the purposes of increases in salaries of foster care agency employees, including, but not limited to, direct care staff, caseworkers, and case planners, as well as the salaries of such workers' supervisors working in such foster care agencies. Such moneys shall be payable on the audit and warrant of the comptroller on vouchers certified or approved by the department of social services in the manner prescribed by law.

§ 4. This act shall take effect immediately.