

HB 1779-FN - AS INTRODUCED

2026 SESSION

26-2429

05/08

HOUSE BILL ***1779-FN***

AN ACT supporting the cultural background of children placed in foster care.

SPONSORS: Rep. Georges, Hills. 23; Rep. Gregg, Hills. 7; Rep. DeSimone, Rock. 18; Rep. M. Pearson, Rock. 34; Rep. Petrigno, Hills. 43; Rep. Markell, Rock. 18; Rep. Wallner, Merr. 19; Rep. Wheeler, Hills. 33; Sen. Long, Dist 20

COMMITTEE: Children and Family Law

ANALYSIS

This bill requires the department of health and human services to take a child's cultural background into consideration when making foster care placements and to develop resources to support foster children's cultural background and heritage.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.
Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough.]~~
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Six

AN ACT supporting the cultural background of children placed in foster care.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 1 Statement of Purpose. The purpose of this act is to:

2 I. Support the ability of children in foster care to maintain their cultural identity.

3 II. Educate and train foster families in cultural sensitivity and practices.

4 III. Ensure the availability of cultural advocates for ongoing support of foster children.

5 IV. Facilitate community engagement in preserving cultural practices.

6 2 Child Day Care Licensing; Rulemaking; Consideration of the Child's Cultural Background.

7 Amend RSA 170-E:11, I(j) to read as follows:

8 (j) Protection and fostering of the particular religious faith **and cultural background**
9 of the children served, where applicable.

10 3 Residential Care and Child-Placing Agency Licensing; Rulemaking; Consideration of the
11 Child's Cultural Background. Amend RSA 170-E:34, I(a)(10) to read as follows:

12 (10) Protection and fostering of the particular religious faith **and cultural**
13 **background** of the children served, where applicable.

14 4 New Paragraph: Foster Parents; Required Cultural Training. Amend RSA 170-E:52 by
15 inserting after paragraph VI the following new paragraph:

16 VII. The department of health and human services shall require foster parents to certify
17 that they have completed a program of instruction that covers:

18 (a) Cultural awareness and sensitivity.

19 (b) The importance to the child of maintaining cultural practices such as language,
20 food, and celebrations.

21 (c) Strategies for integrating cultural elements into the child's daily life.

22 (d) Resources available in the community for engagement with the child's cultural
23 heritage.

24 5 New Sections; Foster Care; Definitions; Cultural Advocates; Cultural Resources and
25 Community Engagement. Amend RSA 170-E by inserting after section 52 the following new
26 sections:

27 170-E:52-a Definitions. In this subdivision:

28 I. "Cultural background" means the cultural heritage and religious traditions of a child's
29 birth parents and other birth relatives.

30 II. "Cultural heritage" means the practices, rituals, language, arts, and social norms that
31 characterize a specific group and contribute to their unique identity.

1 III. "Cultural foster care" means a specialized foster care system that seeks to place children
2 with families who share or respect their cultural background.

3 IV. "Cultural advocate" means a trained professional who supports a child's cultural
4 background and helps both the child and the foster family to integrate the child's cultural
5 background into the foster care.

6 170-E:52-b Cultural Advocates for Children Placed in Foster Care.

7 I. Every child placed in cultural foster care shall be assigned a cultural advocate within 30
8 days after placement.

9 II. The cultural advocate shall be responsible for:

10 (a) Assessing the child's cultural needs and preferences.

11 (b) Assisting foster families in understanding and integrating the child's cultural
12 background into the foster care.

13 (c) Facilitating connections with cultural community resources such as cultural
14 centers, religious organizations, and community groups.

15 (d) Monitoring the child's adjustment to foster care in relation to their cultural identity.

16 170-E:52-c Cultural Resources and Community Engagement.

17 I. The general court finds that sensitivity and support for a foster child's cultural heritage
18 and background plays an integral, indispensable, and vital role in the daily lives of foster children in
19 the state of New Hampshire. The general court further finds that it is in the best interest of the
20 department of health and human services to collaborate and partner with organizations and
21 individuals who can provide foster children and their foster parents with meaningful access,
22 engagement and exposure to culturally appropriate events and experiences.

23 II. The department of health and human services shall:

24 (a) Collaborate and partner with local cultural resource centers that provide programs,
25 events and support tailored to specific cultural communities.

26 (b) Encourage participation in cultural community events, festivals and activities that
27 allow foster children to engage with their cultural heritage.

28 (c) Establish a means by which foster children and foster families can provide feedback
29 on the effectiveness of cultural support, allowing for continuous evaluation and improvement.

30 (d) Develop and publish a timeline for the implementation of the provisions of this
31 section, including the activation of training programs, the assignment of cultural advocates, and the
32 development of community collaborations and partnerships, and shall thereafter publish regular
33 reports on the progress of the implementation of the provisions of this section.

34 170-E:52-d Cultural Foster Care Fund. There is established a nonlapsing fund to be known as
35 the cultural foster care fund, which shall be kept separate and distinct from all other funds. The
36 cultural foster care fund shall be administered by the commissioner of the department of health and
37 human services for purpose of paying costs associated with administering the provisions of this

HB 1779-FN - AS INTRODUCED

- Page 3 -

1 subdivision, including: the development of cultural training programs for foster families;
2 compensation for cultural advocates; and support for cultural resource centers and community
3 partnerships. The department may accept funds from any source, including state appropriations,
4 federal funds, and private gifts, grants, or donations for deposit in the cultural foster care fund.

5 6 New Subparagraph; Dedicated Fund. Amend RSA 6:12, I(b) by inserting after paragraph
6 (410) the following new subparagraph:

7 (411) Moneys deposited in the cultural foster care fund under RSA 170-E:52-d.

8 7 New Paragraph; Foster Care Children's Bill of Rights; Maintenance of Child's Cultural
9 Background. Amend RSA 170-G:21 by inserting after paragraph XV the following new paragraph:

10 XVI. To live in an environment that maintains and reflects the child's cultural background
11 and heritage.

12 8 Effective Date. This act shall take effect January 1, 2027.

**HB 1779-FN- FISCAL NOTE
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AN ACT supporting the cultural background of children placed in foster care.

FISCAL IMPACT: This bill does not provide funding, nor does it authorize new positions.

Estimated State Impact				
	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Revenue	\$0	Indeterminable	Indeterminable	Indeterminable
<i>Revenue Fund(s)</i>	Revenue deposited into the newly-created Cultural Foster Care Fund			
Expenditures*	\$0	\$638,000	\$1,263,000	\$1,325,000
<i>Funding Source(s)</i>	Revenue from the Cultural Foster Care Fund, if available; otherwise, 75 percent general funds and 25 percent federal funds.			
Appropriations*	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Funding Source(s)</i>	None			

*Expenditure = Cost of bill

*Appropriation = Authorized funding to cover cost of bill

METHODOLOGY:

This bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services to take a child’s cultural background into consideration when making foster care placements and to develop resources to support foster children’s cultural background and heritage. In particular, the bill establishes cultural foster care as a specialized system that seeks to place children with families that share or respect their cultural background, and stipulates that every child placed in cultural foster care be assigned a cultural advocate within 30 days of placement. The cultural advocate shall be responsible for assessing the child’s cultural needs and preferences, assisting foster families in understanding and integrating the child’s cultural background into foster care, facilitating connections with cultural community resources such as cultural centers, religious organizations, and community groups, and monitoring the child’s adjustment to foster care in relation to their cultural identity. The bill also requires the Department to collaborate and partner with local cultural resource centers that provide programs, events and support tailored to specific cultural communities. The bill establishes a non-lapsing Cultural Foster Care Fund that is authorized to accept monies from any source, but makes no appropriation to the fund.

The Department assumes that the new responsibilities outlined in the bill will require it to add 14 new case aides, resulting in approximately 42 children assigned to each cultural advocate.

Since the bill has an effective date of January 1, 2027, the Department assumes that 50 percent of a full year's cost will be incurred in FY27. Position costs are estimated as follows:

FY27: \$574,000 (\$41k * 14)

FY28: \$1,134,000 (\$81k * 14)

FY29: \$1,190,000 (\$85k * 14)

In addition, the Department assumes that one Supervisor IV position will be needed, at the following cost:

FY27: \$64,000

FY28: \$129,000

FY29: \$135,000

The combined costs for the anticipated positions are therefore as follows:

FY27: \$638,000

FY28: \$1,263,000

FY29: \$1,325,000

All positions will be paid for with 75 percent state general funds and 25 percent federal funds.

AGENCIES CONTACTED:

Department of Health and Human Services