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Bill Would Extend Benefits to Disabled Adults in Foster Care

by **Margie Menzel**
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The director of the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities said her agency will be able to provide services for severely disabled young adults in extended foster care under a legislative fix now in the works.

Agency director Barbara Palmer said she and state Sen. Nancy Detert, R-Venice, have agreed on a tweak to a 2013 law that extends the option of staying in foster care to age 22 for people with disabilities.

"I've talked with the governor's office, and they're very supportive of us getting this fixed," Palmer said. "They don't want two agencies at odds with each other over children."

Before the law, which took effect Jan. 1, severely disabled foster kids turning 18 would be eligible for what is known as APD's Medicaid "home- and community-based" services waiver on an emergency basis. The kids' legal representatives could cite impending homelessness as an emergency.

But since the law passed, youths have had the option of staying in extended foster care until 21 or 22 for those with disabilities.