
**Early Learning & Human Services
Committee**

HB 2582

Brief Description: Concerning filing a petition seeking termination of parental rights.

Sponsors: Representatives Hargrove, Kagi and Walsh.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the department to file a petition to terminate parental rights if the court approves a sole permanency plan of adoption.

Hearing Date: 1/29/14

Staff: Lindsay Lanham (786-7120).

Background:

When a child is placed in care, the Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration (CA) identifies a permanent planning goal for the child. The CA also utilizes a practice strategy known as concurrent planning, where an alternative plan may also be identified. A stated objective of concurrent planning is to provide for timely reunification services while anticipating and preparing for an alternate permanent plan. The permanency plan options include the following:

- return home to the child's parent, guardian or legal custodian;
- adoption;
- guardianship; and
- third party/non-parental custody.

The CA is required to identify the permanent plan for the child in the written report to the court that includes how the CA is working towards securing a safe, stable and permanent home for the child.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) requires child welfare agencies to file a petition seeking termination of parental rights if a child has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months unless the court makes a good cause exception as to why the filing of a termination petition is not appropriate. An example of a good cause exception is if a child is in the care of a relative.

In addition to ASFA, the Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration (CA) also establishes case standards that help guide child welfare practice. While CA policy does allow timing flexibility in case practice to address termination of parental rights in a case specific manner, some examples as to when social workers are to consider filing a petition to terminate parental rights include the following:

- when a qualified expert has stated the parents are unable to make the changes required to safely parent the child; or
- an infant has been abandoned.

Summary of Bill:

House Bill 2582 requires the department to file a petition seeking the termination of parental rights in any case where the court approves a sole permanency plan of adoption unless the court makes a good cause exception.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.