

# **HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS**

## **HB 1373**

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**Title:** An act relating to interstate agreements to provide adoption assistance for special needs children.

**Brief Description:** Authorizing interstate agreements to provide adoption assistance for special needs children.

**Sponsors:** Representatives McDonald, Tokuda, Kastama, Dickerson, Poulsen, Linville, Costa, Blalock, Cooper, Dunshee, Cooke, Mason and Wood; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

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### **HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES**

***Meeting Date:*** February 6, 1997.

***Bill Analysis Prepared by:*** Doug Ruth (786-7134).

***Background:*** The adoption assistance program is a federally funded program that provides financial assistance to individuals who adopt children with special needs. These children usually have a physical or mental handicap, an emotional disturbance, or another trait that makes them hard to place— for adoption. The assistance is provided through an agreement between the department and the parents of the adopted child. The agreement sets the type, amount, frequency, and manner of payment. Adoption support services under an agreement may include medical coverage through Medicaid, counseling, social services, reimbursement for adoption costs and cash payments to meet a child's needs. If a family relocates to another state, the secretary of the department has the discretion whether or not to continue the agreement.

*Most families who relocate to another state after entering the adoption assistance program have no problems receiving continued assistance. For a small number of families, however, relocation can cause an interruption or a reduction in assistance. These families have difficulties because their children are not generally covered by Medicaid. They receive Medicaid coverage only as a result of participating in this state's adoption assistance program. So when these families relocate, they are often not covered by the medical assistance program of their new resident state and any medical bills incurred by them must be paid through Washington's medical system. In many instances this reduces or delays their medical coverage, as smaller medical providers are unwilling to bill through another state's medical assistance program.*

*For families that are generally covered by Medicaid, they too may have difficulty continuing their coverage after relocation due to administrative problems. Most Medicaid offices do not know how to handle these cases since they are relatively rare, and as a consequence, medical assistance to these families is delayed or interrupted while administrative matters are straightened out.*

**Summary of Bill:** *The department secretary is authorized to enter into interstate compacts for the purpose of protecting children who receive assistance under adoption assistance programs and to set procedures for payments to relocated families. Interstate compacts entered into by the secretary must allow participation or withdrawal by any state, and require that if a state withdraws, it will continue to apply the compact's provisions to the adoption assistance agreements of families who were subject to the compact. Compacts must apply to all families that have a written agreement with a state welfare agency. In addition, compacts entered into under the act may establish procedures for the department to provide medical assistance and social services to adoption assistance children who no longer reside in the state.*

*The medical assistance administration is authorized to provide assistance to children who relocate to Washington, but continue to be subject to an adoption assistance agreement made with an agency of another state. The administration may provide this assistance only if the other state has a reciprocal law or rule.*

*For adopted children who move from Washington to another state, the medical administration is directed to supplement the medical assistance provided to the relocated adopted child by the other state. The medical administration must provide coverage for medical expenses that are neither covered by the resident state's medicaid program nor the parents' private insurance.*

*Interstate agreements entered into by the secretary have the effect of law.*

**Appropriation:** *None.*

**Fiscal Note:** *Not requested.*

**Effective Date:** *Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.*