

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 2709

Title: An act relating to establishing a foster parent retention pilot program.

Brief Description: Halting sexual acting out and offending behaviors in foster care.

Sponsors: Representatives Tokuda, Talcott, D. Sommers, McIntire, Cairnes, Anderson, Ruderman, Mitchell, Delvin, Kagi and Kenney.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Meeting Date: January 31, 2000.

Bill Analysis Prepared by: Deborah Frazier (786-7152).

Background: Children enter foster care for many reasons, including: abuse, neglect, abandonment, or serious physical illnesses. Many of these children have emotional and/or behavioral problems.

Foster homes provide 24-hour care to children who need temporary out-of-home placement. The homes are licensed for a three-year period by the Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services. Foster parents participate in two hours of orientation and 15 hours of pre-service training prior to licensing. Sixty hours of in-service training, over a two-year period, is required after licensing.

Payment rates and available services are intended to support foster parents' efforts to address the complex needs of the children in their care. Foster parents have expressed frustration in addressing the needs of children who have experienced sexual abuse. The Division of Children and Family Services reports that these children molest an average of five children while in foster care. Seventy percent of sexually abused children experience multiple foster home placements.

Summary of Bill: House Bill 2709 establishes a foster parent retention pilot program directed at foster parents caring for children who act out sexually. The Division of Children and Family Services will oversee a contractor who will provide the foster parents:

- emergency assistance;
- on-going assistance in the home; and
- group training.

The pilot program is subject to independent evaluation. The Division of Children and Family Services is charged with presenting the findings of the evaluation to the Legislature. The findings must include:

- the retention rate of foster parents in the program as compared to a comparable group of foster parents who are not in the program;
- incidents of sexual molestation of children by children;
- an estimate of the amount of money saved because of the foster parent retention pilot program; and
- recommendations as to whether a foster parent retention program should be continued.

The bill makes an appropriation of \$330,000 to carry out the purposes of the act, and provides that the act shall be null and void if appropriations are not approved.

Appropriation: The sum of \$330,000. However, the bill is null and void unless appropriations are approved.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 24, 2000.

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