

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5480

As Reported by House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to children placed in the care of relatives.

Brief Description: Encouraging support services for kinship caregivers.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Fairley, McAuliffe, Eide, Rasmussen, Long, Thibaudeau, Kline, Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Regala and McCaslin).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/21/02 [DP].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), within existing resources, to convene a workgroup on kinship caregivers, develop a briefing on the policy issues for the Legislature, and submit the briefing by November 1, 2002.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Tokuda, Chair; Kagi, Vice Chair; Boldt, Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Dickerson, Miloscia, Morell, Nixon and Orcutt.

Staff: Deborah Frazier (786-7152).

Background:

Children who need out of home placement because of abuse, abandonment or neglect may be placed with relatives. This placement may be through a formal process such as dependency or a voluntary agreement, or it may be through an informal arrangement within the family.

Relatives may or may not choose to be licensed as foster homes. If the relative's home is

licensed, the child's care is paid for through foster care funding, the child is eligible for Medicaid, and support services are available. Foster care rates vary with the age of the child; the rate for a child from birth up to age six is \$366 per month, per each child in placement.

If the relative's home is not licensed, the child's care is paid for through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grants, Medicaid coverage is provided, and if the child was placed through a dependency action, support services are available. The TANF grant for the first child, of any age, is \$349 per month. The grant is increased for each subsequent child placed by an increment of at least \$91 per child, per month.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill:

The Legislature recognizes the value of placing children, who are at risk of foster care placement, with relatives.

The DSHS is required, within existing resources, to convene a workgroup on kinship caregivers. The membership of the workgroup is described. The duties of the workgroup are:

- review the Washington State Institute for Public Policy kinship caregivers study which is due in June 2002;
- develop a briefing for the Legislature that identifies the policy issues related to kinship caregivers, the federal and state statutes associated with these issues, and options to address the issues; and
- submit the briefing to the Children and Family Services Committee of the House of Representatives by November 1, 2002.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available for original bill.

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

Testimony For: Kinship placements are the most successful for children, and people work really hard to find kinship placements. Many more families are becoming licensed foster homes so that they can get the advantages of more money, a social worker to help, court jurisdiction and other resources that are available to licensed homes, but not to unlicensed kinship homes. The disadvantage of being licensed is that the social worker, who is a stranger, and the court, also made up of strangers, are doing the case planning for the caregivers' relatives. We support the idea of a work group to lay out a system for supporting kinship caregivers.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Donna Christensen, Washington State Catholic Conference; Darlene Flowers, Foster Parents Association of Washington State; Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society; and Carol Taylor Cann, Washington State Parent Teacher Association.