
**Early Learning & Children's
Services Committee**

HB 1377

Brief Description: Changing provisions affecting the placement of children.

Sponsors: Representatives Pettigrew, Hinkle, Walsh, Haler, Kagi, Appleton, Warnick and Roberts; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the definition of *relative* for the purpose of court-ordered placement of a child in the custody of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).
- Subject to court-review, authorizes placement of a child in the custody of the DSHS with non-relatives who meet certain criteria.

Hearing Date: 2/1/07

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

The Department of Social and Health Services is authorized by law to remove a child from his or her home if the child has been abandoned, abused, or neglected by a parent or guardian. When children are removed from home and taken into the custody of the DSHS, alternative care arrangements for the child must be made. These arrangements are made pursuant to court hearings and disposition orders which govern the child's placement while in the custody of the DSHS.

The Children's Administration within the DSHS places approximately 7,600 children in out-of-home care each year. When determining the best placement for a child, state and federal laws include a preference for placing the child with a relative who is willing and available to care for and meet any special needs of the child. State law allows some relatives to be an eligible placement option for a child without requiring the relative to be a licensed foster parent. These relatives include blood and half-blood relatives; first cousins; nephews and nieces; grandparents;

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stepparents; and stepbrothers and stepsisters. Placement of a child with a relative who is not a licensed foster parent is commonly known as a kinship placement.

Summary of Bill:

Kinship care placement options are expanded to include a child's second cousin and the relatives of any half-sibling of the child. Placement of a child with such a relative who is not a licensed foster parent also is conditioned on the relative being willing and available to care for and meet any special needs of the child.

Subject to court review and a finding that such a placement is in the child's best interests, a child who has been removed from his or her own home may be placed also in the home of another suitable person:

- (1) with whom the child or child's family has a preexisting relationship;
- (2) who has completed the required criminal background checks; and
- (3) who otherwise appears to be suitable and competent to care for the child.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 24, 2007.

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