

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1756

As Reported By House Committee On:

Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to dependent children.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to dependent children.

Sponsors: Representatives Veloria, Cooke, Cody, Lambert, Thibaudeau, Patterson and Costa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/24/95, 2/28/95 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Cooke, Chairman; Lambert, Vice Chairman; Stevens, Vice Chairman; Thibaudeau, Ranking Minority Member; Brown, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boldt; Buck; Carrell; Padden; Patterson and Tokuda.

Staff: David Knutson (786-7146).

Background: If a child is found dependent by the court, the child may be placed with a relative or in a foster care home. Court hearings related to the child's dependency are closed to the general public and the judge may allow a relative caring for the child or the child's foster parent to attend and provide information about the child to the court. Permanency planning options include returning the child home, adoption, guardianship, or long-term relative or foster care placement.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The court is required to allow relatives or foster parents caring for a dependent child to attend court proceedings and provide the court with information and evidence about the child to the court, unless the court states on the record why the person should not be allowed to attend.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The term "permanent custody" is removed from the permanency planning options available for dependent children. The

judge is authorized to deny attendance of a relative providing care for a child or a foster parent at court proceedings if the judge states his or her reasons on the record.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 16, 1995.

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

Testimony For: Grandparents raising their grandchildren are often excluded from court proceedings related to the child's dependency. Grandparents should have greater rights when they are raising their grandchildren.

Testimony Against: The court should be allowed to exclude some people from court proceedings on a case by case basis.

Testified: Representative Velma Veloria, prime sponsor; Rosie Oreskovich, Department of Social and Health Services (concerns); Margaret Casey, Washington State Catholic Conference (concerns); Darlene Flowers, Foster Parents Association of Washington State (pro); Vivian L. and John B. Weers, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (pro); Judy Chinn, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (pro); and Martin Hysong (pro).