

# **HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS**

## **SB 6362**

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**Title:** An act relating to making decisions about the removal and placement of foster children.

**Brief Description:** Changing provisions relating to the removal and placement of foster children.

**Sponsors:** Senators Zarelli, Hargrove, Honeyford, Hochstatter, Johnson, Swecker and Stevens.

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

**Meeting Date:** February 21, 2000.

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

**Background:** The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), within the Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is responsible for:

- investigating abuse and neglect complaints, and protection services, for children living in their own homes;
- family preservation and reconciliation services;
- recruitment of providers for foster care;
- placement of children in foster care, group care and independent living; and,
- adoption services.

The Division of Licensed Resources (DLR), within the Children's Administration of the DSHS, is responsible for:

- licensing all day care, foster care and group care facilities, and child placing agencies;
- monitoring quality of care by licensed providers;
- investigating child protective services cases for children in out-of-home placement; and,
- providing services and training to enhance quality and promote access to child care.

The DLR was created by Executive Order 96-03 in response to recommendations by national child welfare organizations to clearly separate licensing and placement functions to better protect the health and safety of children in out-of-home care. The recommendation resulted from a perceived conflict of interest when decision-making for both functions resided in one organization.

Under current practice, the Program and Policy Division (PPD) and DCFS have responsibility to recruit foster homes. The DLR investigates and recommends removal from an out-of-home placement when there are concerns about the health and safety of the child. The DLR and DCFS jointly decide whether to proceed with removal.

The department reports that in 1999, the DLR conducted 1,888 investigations. Of these, 44 cases resulted in a recommendation for removal.

***Summary of Bill:*** The bill gives the DLR responsibility to recruit new foster homes.

The DCFS is given responsibility to decide whether a child remains with a provider when there has been a founded allegation of abuse or neglect against a licensed provider.

The bill requires the department to consider whether the health and safety of the child would be jeopardized if he or she remained in the provider's home and whether it is in the child's best interests to be removed from the provider's home.

***Appropriation:*** None.

***Fiscal Note:*** Available.

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