

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1397

As Reported by House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

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

Brief Description: Creating the relative caregiver program.

Sponsors: Representatives Tokuda, Boldt, Kagi, Benson, Kenney, Cody, Schual-Berke and Santos.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 1/31/02, 2/4/02 [DPS].

Brief Summary of 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: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill 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 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.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill required the creation of the kinship caregivers program and a monthly benefit. This requirement is replaced by the requirement of the 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Relatives caring for their loved one's children give a lot, and really need support. These responsibilities were unexpected, and it is a real drain on financial

and emotional resources. We're living on limited incomes intended for our retirement. We need help with housing, child care and respite. These kids are so important, it is worth running through our savings, but we could use some help. We'd like to get the same services that are available to foster families. Please go forward and let us help you with these children. It is about hope. It is about survival.

(Neutral) The department (DSHS) supports the concept of this bill. These cases are the fastest growing segment of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) caseload. We want to work with the committee on this.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Tokuda, prime sponsor; Gina Brimmer and Kevin Campbell, Catholic Community Services; Jaunita Smallwood and Abbey Moon Jordan, Grandparents Reparenting; Mary Butler, Indiana Allen and Jeanette Williams, Grandparents As Parents; Howard Winkler, Family Support Center of Thurston County; Lisa Ball, citizen; Karen Gunderson, citizen; George Gonzalez, National Association of Social Workers; Judith Wirth, citizen; and Edith Owen, Children & Family Guidance Center.

(Neutral) Phyllis Lowe, Economic Services Administration, Department of Social and Health Services.