

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2550

*As Passed House
February 13, 1992*

Title: An act relating to child support.

Brief Description: Concerning an order of support for a dependent child.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Hargrove, Appelwick, Belcher and Orr.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Judiciary, February 6, 1992, DP;
Passed House, February 13, 1992, 96-0.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
JUDICIARY**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 17 members:
Representatives Appelwick, Chair; Ludwig, Vice Chair;
Padden, Ranking Minority Member; Paris, Assistant Ranking
Minority Member; Belcher; Broback; Forner; Hargrove; Inslee;
R. Meyers; Mielke; H. Myers; Riley; Scott; D. Sommers; Tate;
and Vance.

Staff: Bill Perry (786-7123).

Background: In a child dependency proceeding in juvenile court, a child may be found to be "dependent" and may be placed in foster care or otherwise separated from a parent. One of the expressed goals of the state's dependency law is to encourage the reunification of families.

The dependency law also provides that when a child has been declared dependent, the court may order the parent(s) of the child to pay child support in accordance with the child support schedule.

There are often costs, such as counselling expenses and time lost from work, that may be incurred in attempting to reunify a family when a child has been placed in foster care. The child support law does not expressly provide for consideration of these reunification costs in setting support amounts. Concern has been expressed that if support amounts are set in strict compliance with the child support

law, the dependency law's goal of reunification may be frustrated in some cases.

Summary of Bill: A juvenile court in a child dependency action shall order child support in accordance with the schedule and standards generally applicable under the child support law. However, in determining how much of a parent's income is subject to the schedule, the court is to take into account the effect reunification efforts may have on the parent's availability for work. After a parent's income has been determined, the court is also to consider costs associated with a reunification as the basis for a possible deviation from the child support schedule.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The bill promotes efficiency by having child support always ordered in the dependency proceeding. It appropriately requires consideration of reunification costs in setting support amounts.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Robin Zukoski, Evergreen Legal Services (in favor); Bob Hoyden, Parents Opposed to Punitive Support (in favor); Diane Roberts, Department of Social and Health Services (expressed concerns about costs); and Lee Ann Miller, Attorney General and Department of Social and Health Services (expressed concerns about costs).