

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2550

AS OF FEBRUARY 25, 1992

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

SPONSORS: Representatives Hargrove, Appelwick, Belcher and Orr

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Staff: Susan Carlson (786-7418)

Hearing Dates: February 27, 1992

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:

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.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested February 19, 1992