

HB 970 -- ADOPTION SUBSIDIES

SPONSOR: Yates

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 7 to 1.

This bill changes the eligibility criteria for the receipt of an adoption or foster care subsidy. The bill:

(1) Specifies that a subsidy is available to families with an income of 300% of the federal poverty level unless the child is considered to have a special need or is eligible for federal Title IV-E adoption assistance;

(2) Specifies that all children regardless of family income are automatically eligible for assistance in the Missouri Medicaid Program until the child reaches the age of 18 or the age of 21 if the child has a special condition;

(3) Allows for subsidized child care until the child turns 13 years old; and

(4) Requires the Children's Division within the Department of Social Services to promulgate rules defining special needs by examining the mental, emotional, or physical disability and the difficulty in placement associated with the care and maintenance of the child.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Income on General Revenue Fund of Greater than \$100,000 in FY 2006, FY 2007, and FY 2008. No impact on Other State Funds in FY 2006, FY 2007, and FY 2008.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the subsidy is necessary to encourage families to adopt children with developmental, emotional, or behavioral problems. The number of adoptions has increased over the past five years; however, cuts to the adoption assistance program will cost the state \$14.1 million in FY 2006. Currently, there are 1,400 children waiting to be adopted, but the number of available families could decrease if the adoption subsidy is cut for families above 200% of the federal poverty level.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Yates; Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition; Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association; Citizens for Missouri's Children; Melanie Scheetz; Kathy Gerst; Missouri Catholic Conference; Foster for a Cause; Donald Schnoor; Connie M. Wiley; Sister John Mandeville; Infinity Beatty; Gary Beltmann; Melinda Ohlemiller; Reverend Kelly S. Allen; Teresa Woolbling; Crystal Williams; Amy Nicholas; Lutheran Family and Children's Services of Missouri; Catherine Martarella;

Sheila and Larry Davis; Maureen Flynn; Vincent and Marsha Gregg; Michael Hogan; William Hudson; Komaletta Jackson; Vielia Jeffries; Bobbi Jones; Richard and Susan Katz; Debbie Mraz; Scott and Christina Schlager; D. Smith; Cynthia Swan; Wright Walling; Connie Wiley; Charlotte Wynn; and Tonya Yetter.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that there should be a means test for assistance under the Missouri Medicaid Program until the child is 18 years old and for subsidized child care until the child reaches 13 years old.

Testifying against the bill was Missouri Council for Children at Risk.

Dominic Lackey, Legislative Analyst