

HCS SCS SB 500 -- MISSOURI PART C EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEM

SPONSOR: Gibbons (Lager)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Special Committee on General Laws by a vote of 7 to 0.

This substitute establishes the Part C Early Intervention System, administered by a lead state agency designated by the Governor, to provide early intervention services to eligible infants and toddlers as determined by state regulations. The system will include a comprehensive, child-find system and public awareness program to ensure that eligible children are identified, located, referred, and evaluated for eligibility. The lead agency will establish a State Interagency Coordinating Council to assist in the implementation of the program.

The delivery of program services will be organized on a regional basis with the lead agency establishing a bidding process for determining regional offices across the state. The bidding process will include criteria for allowing regions to implement models that will serve the unique needs of their community. The bidding process will encourage agreements between organizations and other state and local governmental entities providing similar services to infants and toddlers, including the Department of Mental Health's Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities regional centers and local Senate Bill 40 boards.

Each regional office will include in their proposal assurances and documentation of their plan to provide for those functions that are specifically identified under state and federal regulations and implement a system of provider oversight to ensure all services are available and accessible. The program services will emphasize the family's central role by using coaching approaches and focusing on implementing the child's developmental goals.

No general revenue funds appropriated to the lead agency for the system can be used to satisfy financial commitments for services that should be paid from another public or private source. Federal funds received by the system can be used to prevent the delay of early intervention services; however, the system will seek recovery from public or private sources that have ultimate responsibility for the payment.

Beginning October 1, 2005, families with incomes that are above the Missouri Medicaid Program eligibility level will pay a family cost participation fee on a sliding scale of \$5 to \$100 a month. Moneys collected from the fee and insurance reimbursements will be used to fund the program.

The Part C Early Intervention System Review Commission is established to examine the operation, implementation, and funding of the system. The commission will have nine members consisting of three individuals appointed by the Governor, three members from the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and three members from the Senate appointed by the President Pro Tem of the Senate. The commission will report annually to the General Assembly beginning no later than March 1, 2006.

Currently, school districts may coordinate with public, private, and private not-for-profit agencies for the delivery of special education and related services for children three to four years of age with handicaps. The substitute requires school districts to coordinate with these agencies.

School districts providing early childhood special education will give consideration to the value of continuing services with Part C early intervention system providers for the remainder of the school year when developing an individualized education program for a student who has previously received these services and reaches age three during a regular school year.

Two million dollars will be transferred from the Department of Insurance Dedicated Fund to the Part C Early Intervention System Fund.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Cost on General Revenue Fund of \$50,000 to Unknown in FY 2006, \$1,650,000 to Unknown in FY 2007, and \$1,650,000 to Unknown in FY 2008. Estimated Effect on Other State Funds of a Cost of \$2,000,000 in FY 2006, an Income of \$0 in FY 2007, and an Income of \$0 in FY 2008.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that it is very important to the state to keep the First Steps Program in operation and better manage the available funds. Early intervention is the key to getting these children in programs that will help them to grow and prosper. Families will not have a problem making the co-payments. Insurance companies should be required to pay their fair share. In other states, private insurance pays approximately 40% of the program costs.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Gibbons; Triality, Incorporated; Missouri State Teachers Association; First Steps of Southwest Missouri; Citizens for Missouri's Children; Regional Interagency Coordinating Council for First Steps; and Developmental Services of Franklin County.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that the First Steps Program is very helpful to families. The cost-sharing portion

could be a problem for those families that are on the border line of being eligible for Missouri Medicaid Program benefits and may choose not to participate in this valuable program.

Testifying against the bill was Tom Newport.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that if the bill is passed in its current form, the cost to purchase health insurance will increase. Larger companies will be affected less because they can spread the risk across their entire book of business; however, it may affect smaller companies more. Mandated coverage is never a good idea.

Others testifying on the bill were Group Health Plan; United Healthcare; America's Health Insurance Plans; and Missouri Association of Health Plans.

Marc Webb, Legislative Analyst