

# House Concurrent Resolution No. 37

## 94TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

5409L.011

2       **Whereas**, over one-half of all IV-D caseloads in Missouri are low-income families  
3 who rely on child support for up to one-quarter of their total income. Unfortunately, the  
4 noncustodial parent responsible for providing these payments are often too poor to support  
5 themselves much less fulfill a child support order; and

6       **Whereas**, low-income noncustodial fathers are a particularly disadvantaged group.  
7 In addition to being low-skilled and low-educated, they often have criminal records and suffer  
8 from many poverty-related problems such as poor health. All of these characteristics are barriers  
9 to finding high-paying jobs; and

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11       **Whereas**, federal, state, and local child support agencies have attempted to increase  
12 compliance among these fathers in two ways: lowering child support orders to better meet ability  
13 to pay and addressing the underlying reasons for nonpayment by connecting low-income parents  
14 to employment services; and

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16       **Whereas**, lowering child support orders is successful in increasing compliance, it  
17 results in significantly lower payments to poor families; and

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19       **Whereas**, one way to assure that low-income noncustodial parents receive the  
20 attention they need is to establish separate child support dockets known as "Fathering Courts";  
21 and

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23       **Whereas**, Fathering Courts are an innovative alternative to prosecution and  
24 incarceration for men with significant child support arrearages. The program increases the  
25 number of fathers that contribute financially and emotionally to their children and helps men  
26 successfully overcome the challenges that have led to their nonpayment of child support; and

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28       **Whereas**, the longest-running Fathering Court is in Jackson County, Missouri, and  
29 since its creation in 1998 has increased child support collections by more than \$2 million. The  
30 Jackson County Fathering Court has become a model for others across the country; and

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32       **Whereas**, the Jackson County Fathering Court is designed to give noncustodial  
33 parents the tools to become financially and emotionally responsible for their children. Parents  
34 are educated, counseled, and encouraged to place the needs of their children first; and  
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36       **Whereas**, by emphasizing the needs of the children, the Fathering Court seeks to  
37 promote the well-being of potentially thousands of children who are involved in the state's child  
38 support enforcement system; and  
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40       **Whereas**, the Fathering Court addresses alcohol, drug, employment, and mental  
41 health issues that affect some fathers who face child support charges; and  
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43       **Whereas**, the success of Fathering Courts depends heavily upon judicial support  
44 and initiative. After a father is arrested for failure to pay child support, he is screened to ensure  
45 that he does not have any other serious felonies and then the Fathering Court process begins.  
46 Fathers stay in the program until they have worked through their issues and resumed paying child  
47 support; and  
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49       **Whereas**, more than 429 men have participated in the Fathering Court since 1998.  
50 To date, Fathering Court graduates have contributed more than \$2.7 million in child support  
51 payments. In addition, pre- and post-evaluations indicate that men who graduated from  
52 Fathering Court have significantly more contact with their children, increased interaction with  
53 their child's mother about their child's development, and pay their child support:  
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55       **Now, therefore, be it resolved** by the members of the House of  
56 Representatives of the Ninety-fourth General Assembly, Second Regular Session, the Senate  
57 concurring therein, that to ensure that thoughtful and necessary changes be made to the state's  
58 child support enforcement system in order to increase the number of noncustodial parents  
59 participating in the financial and emotional needs of their children, the General Assembly must  
60 comprehensively study and reform the system; and  
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62       **Be it further resolved** that the Speaker of the House of Representatives and  
63 the President Pro Tempore of the Senate appoint a Joint Interim Committee on Child Support  
64 Enforcement Reform that is authorized to function during the legislative interim between the  
65 Second Regular Session of the Ninety-fourth General Assembly and the First Regular Session  
66 of the Ninety-fifth General Assembly to study and make recommendations regarding a reform  
67 of the state's child support enforcement system, including a study of the Fathering Court in  
68 Jackson County as a model for the entire state; and

69       **Be it further resolved** that the Joint Interim Committee shall prepare a final  
70 report, together with its recommendations for any legislative action deemed necessary for  
71 submission to the General Assembly prior to commencement of the First Regular Session of the  
72 Ninety-fifth General Assembly; and  
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74       **Be it further resolved** that the Joint Interim Committee may solicit input  
75 and information necessary to fulfill its obligations, including but not limited to soliciting input  
76 and information from any state department or agency the Joint Interim Committee deems  
77 relevant, child advocates, the courts, and the general public; and  
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79       **Be it further resolved** that the staffs of House Research, the Joint  
80 Committee on Legislative Research, and Senate Research shall provide such legal, research,  
81 clerical, technical, and bill drafting services as the Joint Interim Committee may require in the  
82 performance of its duties; and  
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84       **Be it further resolved** that the actual and necessary expenses of the Joint  
85 Interim Committee, its members, and any staff assigned to the Joint Interim Committee incurred  
86 by the Joint Interim Committee shall be paid by the Joint Contingent Fund.

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