

HB 2605 with HCA 1 -- CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE (Lauer)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments by Consent" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 12 to 0. Voted "Do Pass by Consent" by the Select Committee on Rules by a vote of 8 to 0.

This bill requires a court and all parties to a case involving a child in care shall defer to the reasonable decisions of the child's designated caregiver involving decisions about the child's participation in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities. The Children's Division or a contracted agency must designate at least one on-site caregiver who has the authority to apply the reasonable and prudent parent standard, as specified in the bill, for each child placed in its custody. Such caregiver must attend a training regarding the reasonable and prudent parent standard. So long as a caregiver acts in accordance with such standard, the caregiver will not be liable for harm caused to a child while participating in an activity chosen by the caregiver.

This bill requires that a child be consulted regarding his or her case plan when that child reaches the age of 14. If a child leaves foster care because he or she has reached the age of 18 or an older age as selected by the state, the Children's Division shall provide the child with an official or certified copy of his or her United States birth certificate, a Social Security card, health insurance information, a copy of the child's medical records, and a driver's license or identification card issued by the state. This shall not apply to children who have reached the age of majority and who have been in child care for less than six months and who are not eligible to receive such documents.

This bill also prohibits a child under the age of 16 from having a permanency plan of another planned permanent living arrangement. For children who do have such a permanency plan, the court must make findings of facts and conclusions of law as specified in the bill.

This bill is the same as HB 2583 (2016).

HCA #1: This amendment makes technical, clarifying changes to the language of the bill, including requiring a foster parent receive training regarding the reasonable and prudent parent standard rather than attend such training.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill is based on the federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act. The legislation puts Missouri in compliance with the federal law and states that foster parents should have reasonable and prudent

parenting standards and powers without going to a judge for each decision. The bill empowers foster parents and allows foster kids to live more normal lives. The legislation permits older youth to participate in their permanency plan. Compliance with the federal law is subject to matching funds under Title IV, so the goal is to move the bill forward quickly because \$104 million is on the line.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Lauer; Tim Decker, Department Of Social Services, Children's Division; Missouri Juvenile Justice Association; Missouri Children's Leadership Council; Missouri Coalition Of Children's Agencies; and the Office Of Child Advocate.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.