

HB 2027 -- CHILDREN'S DIVISION SEARCH EFFORTS

SPONSOR: Wilson

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Special Committee to Improve the Care and Well-being of Young People by a vote of 9 to 3.

This bill states that if the location or identity of the biological parent or parents of a child in the custody of the Children's Division is unknown, the division must conduct a diligent search for the biological parents within the first 60 days of a child being placed in the custody of the division. After 60 days, the division is excused from further search efforts if the court finds that the division used all reasonable and effective means to conduct a diligent search and was unable to identify the biological parents.

In certain cases where the juvenile court has exclusive original jurisdiction, the juvenile court shall ascertain whether legal paternity of the child has been established at the earliest possible opportunity and no later than the first hearing on or after 60 days from when a child has been placed in the custody of the division in certain circumstances. If paternity has not been established, the court may order proceedings to establish paternity.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this time frame to locate and establish parental responsibility is critical and that relieving Children's Division from further efforts does not prevent them from a continued search, if desired.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Wilson and Tim Decker, Department of Social Services, Children's Division.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.