

HB 437 -- CHILD ABUSE REPORTS

SPONSOR: Chipman

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Judiciary by a vote of 17 to 0.

This bill states that if a health care provider reports to the Children's Division of the Department of Social Services that a mother or child has tested positive for alcohol, controlled substances, or other specified drugs, within eight hours of the birth of the child, then the division must submit a referral to the Juvenile Office as soon as reasonably possible.

This bill is similar to HB 2175 (2018).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that when a baby is born addicted to drugs, there can be a referral to the juvenile office, but there has been a drop in referrals. That means that many children are not receiving the services in the Children's Division. Even if there is a referral to the juvenile office, the office is not required to do anything with the referral. The concern is that there are safety plans in place but no one is following up to make sure they are executed properly. It is difficult to have to go into a court to find out what is happening with the children since they aren't being referred as frequently to the juvenile office.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Chipman; Brad Turner; and the Missouri Juvenile Justice Association.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say it's important to remember that juvenile court is set up to be a treatment court and they can't treat the children if they are not being referred to them, especially when it takes a really long time to get referrals. Early referral allows for the allocation of a lot more resources.

Testifying on the bill were Kids Win Missouri; and Mark Calvert.