

HB 1335 -- CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

SPONSOR: Sauls

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Emerging Issues by a vote of 11 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 12 to 1.

This bill allows the Division of Children Services within the Department of Social Services to permit children to voluntarily reenter foster care if due to the child's age the child left care during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Division will provide children with notice of this option, facilitate the return to care, and conduct a public awareness campaign for children under 22 years of age, until September 30, 2021 or while there is a state of emergency due to the pandemic whichever is later.

This bill includes an emergency clause.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill puts Missouri in compliance with federal law. The expense created by this bill can also be covered by federal funds, so it will not cost the state any money. The bill protects people who may already be struggling and whose struggle has been magnified in a pandemic. This bill helps provide stability and care for people who aged out during a time when they were not able to receive full care.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Sauls; Claire Terrebonne, Jackson County CASA; Kids Win Missouri; Katherine Rodgers; Arnie C. Dienoff; American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri; Missouri Coalition of Children's Agencies; and Lori Ross, Foster Adopt Connect.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say the state needs to do more for older youth, who were already likely to experience poor outcomes without a pandemic. The Children's Division is not able to keep these children in care, instead, courts should be the ones required to implement this idea.

Testifying on the bill were the Department of Social Services, and the Office of Child Advocate.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.