FIRST REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE BILL NO. 477

102ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE BROMLEY.

0081H.01I

DANA RADEMAN MILLER, Chief Clerk

AN ACT

To repeal sections 210.854, 452.340, 454.470, and 454.557, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof four new sections relating to child support obligations.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Sections 210.854, 452.340, 454.470, and 454.557, RSMo, are repealed and four new sections enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as sections 210.854, 452.340, 454.470, and 454.557, to read as follows:

210.854. 1. In the event of the entry of a judgment or judgments of paternity and 2 support, whether entered in one judgment or separately, a person against whom such a

judgment or judgments have been entered may file a petition requesting a circuit court with

4 jurisdiction over the subject child or children to set aside said judgment or judgments in the

5 interests of justice and upon the grounds set forth in this section. Such a petition may be filed

6 at any time prior to December 31, 2011. After that date, the petition shall be filed within two

7 years of the entry of the original judgment of paternity and support or within two years of

8 entry of the later judgment in the case of separate judgments of paternity and support and

9 shall be filed in the county which entered the judgment or judgments of paternity and support.

10 Any such petition shall be served upon the biological mother and any other legal guardian or

11 custodian in the same manner provided for service of process in the rules of civil procedure.

12 The child or children shall be made a party and shall have a guardian ad litem appointed for

13 the child or children before any further proceedings are had. If the child or children are

14 recipients of IV-D services as defined in subdivision (8) of section 454.460, the family

15 support division shall also be made a party and shall be duly served.

EXPLANATION — Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted from the law. Matter in **bold-face** type in the above bill is proposed language.

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16 2. The petition shall include an affidavit executed by the petitioner alleging that 17 evidence exists which was not considered before entry of judgment and either:

- (1) An allegation that genetic testing was conducted within ninety days prior to the filing of such petition using DNA methodology to determine the probability or improbability of paternity, and performed by an expert as defined in section 210.834. The affidavit shall also allege that the test results, which are attached thereto, indicate that a person subject to the child support payment order has been excluded as the child's father; or
- (2) A request to the court for an order of genetic paternity testing using DNA methodology.
- 3. The court, after a hearing wherein all interested parties have been given an opportunity to present evidence and be heard, and upon a finding of probable cause to believe said testing may result in a determination of nonpaternity, shall order the relevant parties to submit to genetic paternity testing. The genetic paternity testing costs shall be paid by the petitioner.
- 4. Upon a finding that the genetic test referred to herein was properly conducted, accurate, and indicates that the person subject to the child support payment order has been excluded as the child's father, the court shall, unless it makes written findings of fact and conclusions of law that it is in the best interest of the parties not to do so:
- (1) Grant relief on the petition and enter judgment setting aside the previous judgment or judgments of paternity and support, or acknowledgment of paternity under section 210.823 only as to the child or children found not to be the biological child or children of the petitioner;
- 38 (2) Extinguish any existing child support arrearage only as to the child or children 39 found not to be the biological child or children of the petitioner; and
 - (3) Order the department of health and senior services to modify the child's birth certificate accordingly.
- 42 5. The provisions of this section shall not apply to grant relief to the parent of any 43 adopted child.
 - 6. A finding under subsection 4 of this section shall constitute a material mistake of fact under section 210.823.
 - 7. The provisions of this section shall not be construed to create a cause of action to recover child support or state debt, under subdivision (2) of subsection 1 of section 454.465 and subsection [10] 11 of section 452.340, that was previously paid pursuant to the order. The petitioner shall have no right for reimbursement for any moneys previously paid pursuant to said order.
- 8. Any petitioner who has pled guilty to or been found guilty of an offense for criminal nonsupport under section 568.040, as to a child or children who have been found not 52

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to be the biological child or children of the petitioner, may apply to the court in which the 53 petitioner pled guilty or was sentenced for an order to expunge from all official records all 55 recordations of his arrest, plea, trial, or conviction. If the court determines, after hearing, that the petitioner has had a judgment or judgments of paternity and support set aside under this 56 section, the court shall enter an order of expungement. Upon granting of the order of 57 expungement under this subsection, the records and files maintained in any administrative or 58 59 court proceeding in an associate or circuit division of the circuit court under this section shall 60 be confidential and only available to the parties or by order of the court for good cause shown. The effect of such order shall be to restore such person to the status he or she occupied prior 61 to such arrest, plea, or conviction and as if such event had never taken place. No person as to 62 whom such order has been entered shall be held thereafter under any provision of any law to 63 be guilty of perjury or otherwise giving a false statement by reason of his failure to recite or acknowledge such arrest, plea, trial, conviction, or expungement in response to any inquiry 65 made of him for any purpose whatsoever and no such inquiry shall be made for information 67 relating to an expungement under this section.

- 9. Beginning in 2010, the family support division shall track and report to the general assembly the number of cases known to the division in which a court, within the calendar year, set aside a previous judgment or judgments of paternity and support under subsection 4 of this section. The family support division shall submit the report annually by December thirty-first.
- 452.340. 1. In a proceeding for dissolution of marriage, legal separation or child support, the court may order either or both parents owing a duty of support to a child of the marriage to pay an amount reasonable or necessary for the support of the child, including an award retroactive to the date of filing the petition, without regard to marital misconduct, after considering all relevant factors including:
 - (1) The financial needs and resources of the child;
- (2) The financial resources and needs of the parents;
- 8 (3) The standard of living the child would have enjoyed had the marriage not been 9 dissolved;
- 10 (4) The physical and emotional condition of the child, and the child's educational 11 needs;
- 12 (5) The child's physical and legal custody arrangements, including the amount of time 13 the child spends with each parent and the reasonable expenses associated with the custody or 14 visitation arrangements; and
 - (6) The reasonable work-related child care expenses of each parent.
- 16 2. The obligation of the parent ordered to make support payments shall abate, in whole or in part, for such periods of time in excess of thirty consecutive days that the other

parent has voluntarily relinquished physical custody of a child to the parent ordered to pay child support, notwithstanding any periods of visitation or temporary physical and legal or 20 physical or legal custody pursuant to a judgment of dissolution or legal separation or any modification thereof. In a IV-D case, the family support division may determine the amount 21 22 of the abatement pursuant to this subsection for any child support order and shall record the 23 amount of abatement in the automated child support system record established pursuant to 24 chapter 454. If the case is not a IV-D case and upon court order, the circuit clerk shall record 25 the amount of abatement in the automated child support system record established in chapter 26 454.

- 3. Unless the circumstances of the child manifestly dictate otherwise and the court specifically so provides, the obligation of a parent to make child support payments shall terminate when the child:
- 30 (1) Dies;

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- (2) Marries;
- 32 (3) Enters active duty in the military;
- 33 (4) Becomes self-supporting, provided that the custodial parent has relinquished the 34 child from parental control by express or implied consent;
- 35 (5) Reaches age eighteen, unless the provisions of subsection 4 or 5 of this section 36 apply; or
 - (6) Reaches age twenty-one, unless the provisions of the child support order specifically extend the parental support order past the child's twenty-first birthday for reasons provided by subsection 4 of this section.
 - 4. If the child is physically or mentally incapacitated from supporting himself and insolvent and unmarried, the court may extend the parental support obligation past the child's eighteenth birthday.
 - 5. If when a child reaches age eighteen, the child is enrolled in and attending a secondary school program of instruction, the parental support obligation shall continue, if the child continues to attend and progresses toward completion of said program, until the child completes such program or reaches age twenty-one, whichever first occurs. [If the child is enrolled in an institution of vocational or higher education not later than October first following graduation from a secondary school or completion of a graduation equivalence degree program and so long as the child enrolls for and completes at least twelve hours of credit each semester, not including the summer semester, at an institution of vocational or higher education and achieves grades sufficient to reenroll at such institution, the parental support obligation shall continue until the child completes his or her education, or until the child reaches the age of twenty-one, whichever first occurs. To remain eligible for such continued parental support, at the beginning of each semester the child shall submit to each

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higher education which includes the courses the child is enrolled in and has completed for each term, the grades and credits received for each such course, and an official document from the institution listing the courses which the child is enrolled in for the upcoming term and the number of credits for each such course. When enrolled in at least twelve credit hours, if the child receives failing grades in half or more of his or her courseload in any one semester, payment of child support may be terminated and shall not be eligible for reinstatement. Upon request for notification of the child's grades by the noncustodial parent, the child shall produce the required documents to the noncustodial parent within thirty days of receipt of grades from the education institution. If the child fails to produce the required documents, payment of child support may terminate without the accrual of any child support arrearage and shall not be eligible for reinstatement. If the circumstances of the child manifestly dietate, the court may waive the October first deadline for enrollment required by this subsection. If the child is enrolled in such an institution, the child or parent obligated to pay support may petition the court to amend the order to direct the obligated parent to make the payments directly to the child. As used in this section, an "institution of vocational education" means any postsecondary training or schooling for which the student is assessed a fee and attends classes regularly. "Higher education" means any community college, college, or university at which the child attends classes regularly. A child who has been diagnosed with a developmental disability, as defined in section 630.005, or whose physical disability or diagnosed health problem limits the child's ability to carry the number of credit hours prescribed in this subsection, shall remain eligible for child support so long as such child is enrolled in and attending an institution of vocational or higher education, and the child continues to meet the other requirements of this subsection. A child who is employed at least fifteen hours per week during the semester may take as few as nine credit hours per semester and remain eligible for child support so long as all other requirements of this subsection are complied with. 6. If a child enrolls in an institution of vocational or higher education, the court

parent a transcript or similar official document provided by the institution of vocational or

- 6. If a child enrolls in an institution of vocational or higher education, the court shall not, as part of the court's judgment, order one parent to pay for any expenses related to that child attending the institution of vocational or higher education. As used in this section, an "institution of vocational education" means any postsecondary training or schooling for which the student is assessed a fee and attends classes regularly. "Higher education" means any community college, college, or university at which the child attends classes regularly.
- 7. The court shall consider ordering a parent to waive the right to claim the tax dependency exemption for a child enrolled in an institution of vocational or higher education

91 in favor of the other parent if the application of state and federal tax laws and eligibility for 92 financial aid will make an award of the exemption to the other parent appropriate.

[7-] 8. The general assembly finds and declares that it is the public policy of this state that frequent, continuing and meaningful contact with both parents after the parents have separated or dissolved their marriage is in the best interest of the child except for cases where the court specifically finds that such contact is not in the best interest of the child. In order to effectuate this public policy, a court with jurisdiction shall enforce visitation, custody and child support orders in the same manner. A court with jurisdiction may abate, in whole or in part, any past or future obligation of support and may transfer the physical and legal or physical or legal custody of one or more children if it finds that a parent has, without good cause, failed to provide visitation or physical and legal or physical or legal custody to the other parent pursuant to the terms of a judgment of dissolution, legal separation or modifications thereof. The court shall also award, if requested and for good cause shown, reasonable expenses, attorney's fees and court costs incurred by the prevailing party.

[8-] 9. The Missouri supreme court shall have in effect a rule establishing guidelines by which any award of child support shall be made in any judicial or administrative proceeding. Said guidelines shall contain specific, descriptive and numeric criteria which will result in a computation of the support obligation. The guidelines shall address how the amount of child support shall be calculated when an award of joint physical custody results in the child or children spending equal or substantially equal time with both parents and the directions and comments and any tabular representations of the directions and comments for completion of the child support guidelines and a subsequent form developed to reflect the guidelines shall reflect the ability to obtain up to a fifty percent adjustment or credit below the basic child support amount for joint physical custody or visitation as described in subsection [11] 12 of this section. The Missouri supreme court shall publish child support guidelines and specifically list and explain the relevant factors and assumptions that were used to calculate the child support guidelines. Any rule made pursuant to this subsection shall be reviewed by the promulgating body not less than once every four years to ensure that its application results in the determination of appropriate child support award amounts.

[9:] 10. There shall be a rebuttable presumption, in any judicial or administrative proceeding for the award of child support, that the amount of the award which would result from the application of the guidelines established pursuant to subsection 8 of this section is the correct amount of child support to be awarded. A written finding or specific finding on the record in a judicial or administrative proceeding that the application of the guidelines would be unjust or inappropriate in a particular case, after considering all relevant factors, including the factors set out in subsection 1 of this section, shall be required and shall be sufficient to rebut the presumption in the case. The written finding or specific finding on the

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record shall detail the specific relevant factors that required a deviation from the application of the guidelines.

- [10.] 11. Pursuant to this or any other chapter, when a court determines the amount owed by a parent for support provided to a child by another person, other than a parent, prior to the date of filing of a petition requesting support, or when the director of the family support division establishes the amount of state debt due pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection 1 of section 454.465, the court or director shall use the guidelines established pursuant to subsection [8] 9 of this section. The amount of child support resulting from the application of the guidelines shall be applied retroactively for a period prior to the establishment of a support order and the length of the period of retroactivity shall be left to the discretion of the court or director. There shall be a rebuttable presumption that the amount resulting from application of the guidelines under subsection [8] 9 of this section constitutes the amount owed by the parent for the period prior to the date of the filing of the petition for support or the period for which state debt is being established. In applying the guidelines to determine a retroactive support amount, when information as to average monthly income is available, the court or director may use the average monthly income of the noncustodial parent, as averaged over the period of retroactivity, in determining the amount of presumed child support owed for the period of retroactivity. The court or director may enter a different amount in a particular case upon finding, after consideration of all relevant factors, including the factors set out in subsection 1 of this section, that there is sufficient cause to rebut the presumed amount.
- [11.] 12. The court may award child support in an amount that provides up to a fifty percent adjustment below the basic child support amount authorized by the child support guidelines described under subsection [8] 9 of this section for custody awards of joint physical custody where the child or children spend equal or substantially equal time with both parents.
- [12.] 13. The obligation of a parent to make child support payments may be terminated as follows:
- (1) Provided that the state case registry or child support order contains the child's date of birth, the obligation shall be deemed terminated without further judicial or administrative process when the child reaches age twenty-one if the child support order does not specifically require payment of child support beyond age twenty-one for reasons provided by subsection 4 of this section;
- (2) The obligation shall be deemed terminated without further judicial or administrative process when the parent receiving child support furnishes a sworn statement or affidavit notifying the obligor parent of the child's emancipation in accordance with the requirements of subsection 4 of section 452.370, and a copy of such sworn statement or

affidavit is filed with the court which entered the order establishing the child support obligation, or the family support division for an order entered under section 454.470;

- (3) The obligation shall be deemed terminated without further judicial or administrative process when the parent paying child support files a sworn statement or affidavit with the court which entered the order establishing the child support obligation, or the family support division for an order entered under section 454.470, stating that the child is emancipated and reciting the factual basis for such statement; which statement or affidavit is served by the court or division, as applicable, on the child support obligee; and which is either acknowledged and affirmed by the child support obligee in writing, or which is not responded to in writing within thirty days of receipt by the child support obligee;
- (4) The obligation shall be terminated as provided by this subdivision by the court which entered the order establishing the child support obligation, or the family support division for an order entered under section 454.470, when the parent paying child support files a sworn statement or affidavit with the court which entered the order establishing the child support obligation, or the family support division, as applicable, stating that the child is emancipated and reciting the factual basis for such statement; and which statement or affidavit is served by the court or division, as applicable, on the child support obligee. If the obligee denies the statement or affidavit, the court or division shall thereupon treat the sworn statement or affidavit as a request for hearing and shall proceed to hear and adjudicate such request for hearing as provided by law; provided that the court may require the payment of a deposit as security for court costs and any accrued court costs, as provided by law, in relation to such request for hearing. When the division receives a request for hearing, the hearing shall be held in the manner provided by section 454.475.
- [13.] 14. The court may enter a judgment terminating child support pursuant to subdivisions (1) to (3) of subsection [12] 13 of this section without necessity of a court appearance by either party. The clerk of the court shall mail a copy of a judgment terminating child support entered pursuant to subsection [12] 13 of this section on both the obligor and obligee parents. The supreme court may promulgate uniform forms for sworn statements and affidavits to terminate orders of child support obligations for use pursuant to subsection [12] 13 of this section and subsection 4 of section 452.370.
- 454.470. 1. The director may issue a notice and finding of financial responsibility to a parent who owes a state debt or who is responsible for the support of a child on whose behalf the custodian of that child is receiving support enforcement services from the division pursuant to section 454.425 if a court order has not been previously entered against that parent, a court order has been previously entered but has been terminated by operation of law or if a support order from another state has been entered but is not entitled to recognition under sections 454.850 to 454.997. Service of the notice and finding shall be made on the

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8 parent or other party in the manner prescribed for service of process in a civil action by an authorized process server appointed by the director, or by certified mail, return receipt 10 requested. The director may appoint any uninterested party, including but not limited to employees of the division, to serve such process. For purposes of this subsection, a parent who refuses receipt of service by certified mail is deemed to have been served. Service upon an obligee who is receiving support enforcement services under section 454.425 may be made by regular mail. When appropriate to the circumstances of the individual action, the notice shall state: 15

- (1) The name of the person or agency with custody of the dependent child and the name of the dependent child for whom support is to be paid;
 - (2) The monthly future support for which the parent shall be responsible;
- (3) The state debt, if any, accrued and accruing, and the monthly payment to be made on the state debt which has accrued; 20
 - (4) A statement of the costs of collection, including attorney's fees, which may be assessed against the parent;
 - (5) That the parent shall be responsible for providing medical insurance for the dependent child;
 - (6) That if a parent desires to discuss the amount of support that should be paid, the parent or person having custody of the child may, within twenty days after being served, contact the division office which sent the notice and request a negotiation conference. The other parent or person having custody of the child shall be notified of the negotiated conference and may participate in the conference. If no agreement is reached on the monthly amount to be paid, the director may issue a new notice and finding of financial responsibility, which may be sent to the parent required to pay support by regular mail addressed to the parent's last known address or, if applicable, the parent's attorney's last known address. A copy of the new notice and finding shall be sent by regular mail to the other parent or person having custody of the child;
 - (7) That if a parent or person having custody of the child objects to all or any part of the notice and finding of financial responsibility and no negotiation conference is requested, within twenty days of the date of service the parent or person having custody of the child shall send to the division office which issued the notice a written response which sets forth any objections and requests a hearing; and, that if the director issues a new notice and finding of financial responsibility, the parent or person having custody of the child shall have twenty days from the date of issuance of the new notice to send a hearing request;
 - (8) That if such a timely response is received by the appropriate division office, and if such response raises factual questions requiring the submission of evidence, the parent or person having custody of the child shall have the right to a hearing before an impartial hearing

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45 officer who is an attorney licensed to practice law in Missouri and, that if no timely written response is received, the director may enter an order in accordance with the notice and finding 47 of financial responsibility;

- (9) That the parent has the right to be represented at the hearing by an attorney of the parent's own choosing;
- (10) That the parent or person having custody of the child has the right to obtain evidence and examine witnesses as provided for in chapter 536, together with an explanation of the procedure the parent or person having custody of the child shall follow in order to exercise such rights;
- (11) That as soon as the order is entered, the property of the parent required to pay support shall be subject to collection actions, including, but not limited to, wage withholding, garnishment, liens, and execution thereon;
 - (12) A reference to sections 454.460 to 454.510;
- (13) That the parent is responsible for notifying the division of any change of address 59 or employment;
 - (14) That if the parent has any questions, the parent should telephone or visit the appropriate division office or consult an attorney; and
 - (15) Such other information as the director finds appropriate.
- 2. The statement of periodic future support required by subdivision (2) of subsection 64 1 of this section is to be computed under the guidelines established in subsection [8] 9 of section 452.340.
 - 3. Any time limits for notices or requests may be extended by the director, and such extension shall have no effect on the jurisdiction of the court, administrative body, or other entity having jurisdiction over the proceedings.
 - 4. If a timely written response setting forth objections and requesting a hearing is received by the appropriate division office, and if such response raises a factual question requiring the submission of evidence, a hearing shall be held in the manner provided by section 454.475. If no timely written response and request for hearing is received by the appropriate division office, the director may enter an order in accordance with the notice, and shall specify:
- 75 (1) The amount of periodic support to be paid, with directions on the manner of 76 payment;
 - (2) The amount of state debt, if any, accrued in favor of the department;
- 78 (3) The monthly payment to be made on state debt, if any;
- 79 (4) The amount of costs of collection, including attorney's fees, assessed against the 80 parent;

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81 (5) The name of the person or agency with custody of the dependent child and the name and birth date of the dependent child for whom support is to be paid; 82

- (6) That the property of the parent is subject to collection actions, including, but not limited to, wage withholding, garnishment, liens, and execution thereon; and
- (7) If appropriate, that the parent shall provide medical insurance for the dependent child, or shall pay the reasonable and necessary medical expenses of the dependent child.
- 5. The parent or person having custody of the child shall be sent a copy of the order by regular mail addressed to the parent's last known address or, if applicable, the parent's attorney's last known address. The order is final, and action by the director to enforce and collect upon the order, including arrearages, may be taken from the date of issuance of the order.
- 6. Copies of the orders issued pursuant to this section shall be mailed within fourteen days of the issuance of the order.
- 7. Any parent or person having custody of the child who is aggrieved as a result of any allegation or issue of fact contained in the notice and finding of financial responsibility shall be afforded an opportunity for a hearing, upon the request in writing filed with the director not more than twenty days after service of the notice and finding is made upon such parent or person having custody of the child, and if in requesting such hearing, the aggrieved parent or person having custody of the child raises a factual issue requiring the submission of evidence.
- 8. At any time after the issuance of an order under this section, the director may issue an order vacating that order if it is found that the order was issued without subject matter or personal jurisdiction or if the order was issued without affording the obligor due process of law.
- 454.557. 1. A current support obligation shall not be recorded in the records maintained in the automated child support system in the following cases:
- (1) In a IV-D case with a support order pursuant to section 454.465 or 454.470 when 4 the division determines that payments for current support are no longer due and should no longer be made to the payment center. The division shall notify by first class mail the obligor 5 and obligee under the support orders that payments shall no longer be made to the payment center, and any withholding of income shall be terminated unless it is subsequently determined by the division or court having jurisdiction that payments will continue. The division's determination shall terminate the division's support order, but shall not terminate any obligation of support established by court order. The obligor and obligee may contest the 10 decision of the division to terminate the division's support order by requesting a hearing 12 within thirty days of the mailing of the notice provided pursuant to this section. The hearing shall comply with the provisions of section 454.475;

- 14 (2) In all cases with a support order entered by a court when the court that issued the 15 support order terminates such order. The division shall also cease enforcing the order if no 16 past support is due; or
- 17 (3) In all cases when the obligation of a parent to make child support payments is deemed terminated under subdivisions (1) to (4) of subsection [11] 12 of section 452.340.
- 2. Nothing in this section shall affect or terminate the amount due for unpaid past support.

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