

HCS HB 764 -- CHILD PROTECTIONS REQUIRED FOR CERTAIN CHILDREN'S HOMES

SPONSOR: Gragg

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Professional Registration and Licensing by a vote of 13 to 5 with 1 voting present.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 764.

Under this bill, a child care facility or organization seeking to provide care for children can register with a qualified association, as described in the bill, in place of obtaining a child care license. The qualified association must have been in place for a minimum of 20 years, must publish and require compliance with the association's written policies and standards and file copies of those standards with the children's division, and must have a board of directors able to conduct oversight of member organizations. Upon filing a registration application with the qualified association and meeting the association's requirements and the local or state fire, safety, health, sanitation, and paid and unpaid personnel screening requirements, the facility or organization must receive, at no charge, a certificate of registration from the association that will be valid for two years.

The parent, guardian, or agency and the facility or organization registered with the qualified association must have a written contract for each child cared for by the facility or organization that sets forth the services provided by the facility or organization, the registration with and contact information of the qualified organization, the cost of the services, the disciplinary procedures, and authorization for consent to routine or emergency medical care of the child.

This bill establishes the "Child Protection Board" within the Department of Social Services to provide oversight of facilities and organizations registered with the qualified association and to report to the Department as needed. The Board must consist of 12 members: a judge of a juvenile or family court as appointed by the supreme court of Missouri and eleven members, appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, as described in the bill. The Board must independently review any decision of the Children's Division in which an alleged perpetrator of child abuse or neglect is aggrieved by a decision of the Division and must make recommendations to the division. Additionally, the Board can recommend a corrective action plan or deny, suspend, or revoke

a facility or organization's registration if the facility or organization fails to comply with the standards established by the qualified association.

The director of the children's division can place a participating facility or organization on a corrective action plan or revoke, suspend, or deny a registration of a participating or prospective facility or organization upon:

(1) A finding that the facility or organization knowingly allowed personnel or other persons subject to background checks under section 210.493, RSMo, to work, volunteer, or engage in any prohibited activity at the facility or organization without eligibility determinations;

(b) Any violation of the regulations promulgated to implement this section; or

(c) Any findings of abuse or neglect occurring within the facility or organization.

The facility or organization will retain the right to appeal the Department's decision to the Administrative Hearing Commission for a final determination.

Any facility or organization that applies for and receives a license under the state's licensing laws will not be eligible to operate under the provisions of this bill.

The children's division can place a child within a facility or organization registered under this bill.

Employees of registered facilities and organizations must be subject to background checks.

This bill is the similar to SB 525 (2025).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that every child deserves a home. This creates a partnership with the State and an extra layer of protection for children with no cost to the State.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Gragg; Arnie Dienoff; Chad Pickett, Missouri Association of Christian Childcare Agencies; Denice Blew, Shiloh Christian Children's Ranch; Katrina

Woods; Mark Adkison, Shiloh Christian Children's Ranch; Michaela Newell, St. Nicholas Academy.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that these security measures are already in place for unlicensed facilities. This bill is duplicative. This creates additional layers of risk where children can be harmed.

Testifying in person against the bill were Children's Trust Fund; Missouri Network Against Child Abuse.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say current licensed facilities can require attending church services. Current laws are working well and some of this bill is duplicative.

Testifying in person on the bill was Adam Albach, Department of Social Services.

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