

HCS HB 927 -- FATHERSHIP

SPONSOR: Gragg

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 15 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 927.

This bill designates the month of June as "Fathership Month" in Missouri, encouraging events and activities to raise awareness about the importance of fathers being a part of their children's lives.

Additionally, the bill establishes within the Department of Social Services the "Missouri Fathership Project", to promote fathership and empower fathers to become successful in fathership.

The bill establishes the "Missouri Fathership Project Grant Program" which is a program and accompanying fund for family-focused community agencies, faith-based agencies, family advocacy programs, and nonprofit organizations to apply for in order to hire, train, and facilitate fathership project specialists, who are to serve as a point of contact for fathers who want to reestablish and strengthen relationships with their children.

The bill specifies the duties of fathership project specialists, including, but not limited to, being dispatched to engage with a father who does not comply with a visitation and custody order, at which point a court or the division is required to issue a referral to a partnering entity utilizing services from a fathership project specialist.

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 children do better emotionally, economically, and educationally when there is a father present in the home. While it is not possible to mend all broken families, the State can and should do what is possible to ensure fathers remain involved in their children's lives.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Gragg; Mark Ludwig; Stephanie Shermeta, Man Up; Tim Mcconville, Man Up; Linda Reutzel.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that there is no need to have a "Fathership Month" when we already have Father's Day and Father's Day Weekend, and this would expand the size of the government by requiring more expenses for salaries, benefits, pensions, and other expenses.

Testifying in person against the bill was Arnie Dienoff.

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.