

HB 1772 -- ADOPTION SUBSIDIES (Amato)

COMMITTEE OF ORIGIN: Standing Committee on Children and Families

Currently, the Children's Division of the Department of Social Services is authorized to grant a subsidy to certain children in the custody of the division for the child's care. This applies to a child who is five years of age or older, or who belongs to a racial or ethnic minority, or who is in need of medical, dental, educational, mental, or other related health services, and for whom an adoptive home is not readily available. This includes maintenance, child care, respite, the reimbursement of non-recurring adoption expenses, and MO HealthNet coverage.

This bill requires the Division, beginning January 1, 2027, and for five years thereafter, to make the grants provided under current law available to be paid toward the legal expenses incurred by a prospective adoptive parent upon the successful completion of adoption proceedings.

The grant must be specified in a written agreement entered into by the Division and the adoptive parent or parents, and cannot exceed \$2,500 for uncontested adoptions and \$4,000 for contested adoptions.

A separate grant for guardian ad litem fees must be made available and cannot exceed \$500. Both grants are billed at the rate of \$175 per hour of legal services provided by an attorney licensed in this state.