

HCS HB 1948 -- FATHERHOOD ENGAGEMENT

SPONSOR: Gragg

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 17 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 10 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 1948.

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.

Subject to Federal approval and state appropriations, the bill establishes within the Department of Social Services the "Missouri Fathership Project", to promote fatherhood engagement and empower fathers to become successful in fatherhood engagement.

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 court-ordered case plan, 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.

This bill is similar to HB 927 (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.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that children benefit immensely when both parents are positively involved in their children's lives, but many fathers face significant setbacks hindering their

ability to maintain strong connections with their children. This bill would help to strengthen relationships between fathers and children

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Gragg; Mark Ludwig; Tim McConville, Man Up And Go; and Missouri Catholic Conference.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that there are numerous other programs and projects with the same purpose, and that this bill would be unnecessary and duplicative.

Testifying in person against the bill was Arnie C. Dienoff.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that the fiscal note is being worked on to be brought in line and streamline inefficiencies.

Testifying in person on the bill was Haylee Munro, Missouri 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.