HCS SS#3 SB 1062 -- THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

SPONSOR: Carter

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on General Laws by a vote of 12 to 2. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Administrative by a vote of 8 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for SB 1062.

This bill requires the Commissioner of Administration, prior to awarding any contract in an amount of $20 million or more, to obtain the consent of both the chair of the House Budget Committee and the chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The bill removes a provision that caps the annual grant amount provided by the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Under this bill, the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing shall establish a statewide communication access services program to improve compliance with the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act for agencies and businesses by coordinating resources, filling service gaps, and assisting with costs related to accommodations. The Commission shall develop a statewide registry of service providers, establish training and equipment standards, maintain an informational website, provide training, conduct outreach, and submit an annual report to the Governor and General Assembly, as described in the bill. The Commission shall also, subject to appropriation, finance requests for assistance in providing communication access services and administer scholarships for professional development, internships, and certification testing.

This bill establishes the "Inspiration Act" and creates the "Inspiration" program, within the Department of Social Services. The bill requires the Department to coordinate with various state agencies and a partner network to assist participants in achieving personal goals, self-sufficiency, community integration, and a prosperous future. Participation in the Inspiration program is limited to legal residents who are 18 years of age or older, except as otherwise provided in the bill. State departments and agencies are required to participate in the Inspiration program at the direction of the Governor. In order

to use government resources more effectively and efficiently, participating state departments and agencies shall use existing resources and personnel, to the extent possible, to operate the Inspiration program.

The bill establishes the "Task Force on the Protection of Children and Families". The Task Force member qualifications are specified in the bill and are composed of nine members, including three members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, three members appointed by President Pro Tem of the Senate, and three members appointed by the Governor.

The Task Force's purpose is to implement the provisions of the Inspiration program, safeguard children by providing rigorous oversight of prevention efforts, and ensure accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement across all systems responsible for protecting children from abuse.

The Task Force must submit a report to the General Assembly and the Governor no later than December 30, 2027. The report must include updates on the implementation of the inspiration program and recommendations, as specified in the bill.

The Task Force will expire on December 31, 2027.

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

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill ensures that families get to stay together without children having to go into foster care. This already exists in 36 Missouri counties. It is budget friendly, and foster kids deserve to have more resources. This bill will help communities, businesses, and rural areas provide access to services for the blind and deaf. Many states already have a similar program in place. These services aren't cheap, but we can do better. Supporters further state that current communication access is stuck like it was 30 years ago. For many deaf people, English is a second language. Oftentimes, the only interpreter available for a family are the hearing children of deaf parents.

Testifying in person for the bill were Senator Carter; Clark Corogenes; Becky Davis, Missouri Commission For The Deaf & Hard of Hearing; Crystal Rush; Tommy Rush; Amber Carter; Dennis Bacon, Grandpa's Goody Getter; Richard P Miller; Kristopher C. Karnes; Ashton Karnes; Shanda Miller; and Arnie Dienoff.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

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.