

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

Action: Do Pass with Amendments to the A-Engrossed Measure. (Be Printed B-Engrossed).

Vote: 5 - 0 - 0

Yeas: Bates, Kruse, Morse, Shields, Monnes Anderson

Nays: 0

Exc.: 0

Prepared By: Brian Niebuurt, Administrator

Meeting Dates: 4/25, 5/2

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Expands definition of “child” for purposes of payments to subsidize adoption made by the Department of Human Services (DHS). Requires DHS to pay nonrecurring adoption expenses in connection with the adoption of a child with special needs. Clarifies limitations on payments to adoptive parents to include when the child is no longer receiving any support from the adoptive parents. Requires adoptive parents to inform DHS of circumstances affecting eligibility. Clarifies that amount of payments are determined by negotiations with the adoptive parents. Allows DHS to change payment amounts through negotiation with the adoptive parents or when DHS has changed the amount of comparable assistance in foster care. Clarifies that DHS may suspend or terminate payments when: (a) the child attains 18 years of age; (b) the adoptive parents are no longer legally responsible for the support of the child; or (c) the child is no longer receiving any support from the adoptive parents. Becomes operative October 1, 2011. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Purpose of adoption assistance
- Negotiation of adoption assistance contract
- Eligibility criteria
- Number of children expanded definition would include
- Eligibility and use of federal subsidies and federal match rate
- Average payment amounts

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: Clarifies that amount of payments is determined by negotiations with the adoptive parents. Allows DHS to change payment amounts through negotiation with the adoptive parents or when DHS has changed the amount of comparable assistance in foster care. Clarifies that DHS may suspend or terminate payments when: (a) the child attains 18 years of age; (b) the adoptive parents are no longer legally responsible for the support of the child; or (c) the child is no longer receiving any support from the adoptive parents.

BACKGROUND: The federal Adoption Assistance and Welfare Act of 1980 established state-run programs designed to remove financial barriers to adoption. These programs are federally funded but states set the eligibility criteria.

House Bill 2052-B expands eligibility for adoption assistance subsidies to allow payments to continue until an adopted child turns 21 years of age provided that the child was adopted between the ages and 16 and 18 and is engaged in specific academic or vocational preparation programs, or meets basic eligibility criteria and has disabilities precluding independence at 18 years of age. The bill allows DHS to take advantage of additional federal funding options. The bill also brings adoption practices in line with foster care practices, in which payments are made for children up to the age of 21. DHS indicates this payment expansion will create an incentive for families to adopt older children, providing them with an environment that achieves better long-term outcomes. DHS indicates that over the past five fiscal years 68 children have been adopted at age 16 or older.

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This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.