

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5811

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Children & Family Services & Corrections, February 21, 2003

Title: An act relating to the involvement of the birth family in foster care.

Brief Description: Requiring greater opportunities for involvement of birth families in foster care.

Sponsors: Senators Hargrove, Stevens and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Children & Family Services & Corrections: 2/18/03, 2/21/03 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5811 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Stevens, Chair; Parlette, Vice Chair; Carlson, Deccio, Hargrove, McAuliffe and Regala.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: Children placed in foster care often have little or no contact with their birth family for the duration of their placement. They rarely see interaction between their foster family and birth family, and yet the majority of children placed in foster care are returned to their birth family.

Summary of Substitute Bill: It is the intent of the Legislature to sanction a connection between the birth family and foster family by encouraging foster parents to provide input to social workers and birth parents about the child placed in their care, mentoring birth parents by modeling appropriate, healthy parenting behaviors and assisting in visitation with birth families.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The definition of "birth family" is narrowed. "Birth family" is defined to include blood relatives, those of half blood, stepparents and siblings, adoptive parents, spouses and extended family members if defined by an Indian child's tribe.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Having positive contact between foster parents and birth parents can be helpful to children dealing with the crisis of being removed from their home. Most foster children are returned to their birth parents.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Laverne Lamoureux, Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration (pro, with concerns); Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society (pro).