

HCS HB 1568 -- DISCLOSURE OF CERTAIN FOSTER CARE LICENSURE
INFORMATION AND THE SAFE PLACE FOR NEWBORNS ACT

SPONSOR: Largent (McManus)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass by consent" by the Committee on
Children and Families by a vote of 14 to 0.

This substitute changes the laws regarding the disclosure of
certain foster care licensure information and the provisions of
the Safe Place for Newborns Act of 2002.

A public governmental body can close meetings, records, and votes
if they relate to personal information obtained in the process of
licensing a foster home. The Division of Family Services within
the Department of Social Services must make a report available
for each foster home that is licensed and for each foster home
renewing an existing license which includes:

(1) The names of all persons 18 years of age or older licensed
to operate the foster home and the amount of state funds paid to
the person for foster care services;

(2) A description of the background investigation conducted on
all persons operating or maintaining the foster home including
certain specified documentation;

(3) A description of all concerns raised during the background
investigation and foster home licensure process and how those
concerns were resolved;

(4) A description of the person's ability to perform the minimum
competency requirements of a foster parent;

(5) A list of all references provided by each person, stating
the reference's name, how and when the reference was contacted,
and a brief description of the reference's opinion of the person;

(6) The number of the operator's previous foster care
assignments, if any; and

(7) Any history of previous complaints involving the foster care
operator or the foster child.

The report must not contain the address of any residence or any
personal information not otherwise required which could be used
by another to threaten, harm, harass, or embarrass any person.
Specified records will be considered public records in the event
of serious injury, death, or criminal incident involving a foster
child.

Currently, under the Safe Place for Newborns Act of 2002, a parent may voluntarily relinquish a newborn up to five days after the child's birth by safely delivering physical custody of the baby to certain persons without being prosecuted for child abandonment. The substitute increases that time period to up to 45 days after birth.

No parent voluntarily relinquishing a child will be required to release any identifying information about the child or parent. No officer, employee, or agent of this state or any political subdivision can attempt to locate or determine the identity of a parent or disclose identifying information except in certain cases.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2013, FY 2014, and FY 2015.

PROPOSERS: The bill allows a parent more time to make the difficult decision to relinquish a newborn.

Testifying for the bill were Representative McManus; Debby Howland, Child Abuse Roundtable; and Regina Weir, Mother and Child Health Coalition.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.