

HCS HB 1399 -- TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

SPONSOR: DeGroot

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Judiciary by a vote of 7 to 1.

This bill allows the parental rights of a biological father to be terminated if he is alleged to have committed forcible rape or rape in the first degree that resulted in the conception and birth of the child. In any such termination action, the court may order that the mother and child are entitled to payment for reasonable medical expenses, child support, rights to inherit under the probate code, the designation of the child as beneficiary for specified life insurance products, or any other financial benefits that are in the best interests of the child or for the reasonable expenses of the mother. The court shall issue such order only if the mother consents; however, the court shall first inform the mother that such order may require or obligate the mother to have continuous or future communication and contact with the biological father.

If a mother declines to seek a court order for child support, no state agency shall require the mother to do so to receive public assistance benefits for herself or the child.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill deals specifically in cases where a woman is raped and gets pregnant but is unable to get child support without giving the rapist parental rights. Arkansas, Illinois, Colorado, and Oregon allow a woman to collect child support but still terminate parental rights. The only issue that there are some offenders who file for custody before their criminal trials are heard, but it's a great idea other than that.

Testifying for the bill were Representative DeGroot; Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence; and Campaign Life Missouri.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.