

HCS HB 1491 -- TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

SPONSOR: Kelley (127)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Judiciary by a vote of 7 to 2. Voted "Do Pass" by the Rules- Legislative Oversight Committee by a vote of 12 to 0.

This bill requires a court, in certain juvenile court cases, to consider and enter findings of fact and conclusions of law on whether a child is an abandoned infant or whether the child's parent harmed the child or another child as specified in the bill. These findings must be admitted into evidence for a petition for termination of parental rights or a petition for adoption. The juvenile office or Children's Division within the Department of Social Services may file a petition to terminate parental rights if the court finds that the child's parent harmed the child or another child in ways specified in the bill.

The bill clarifies that a juvenile officer or the division can file a petition to terminate parental rights only when the child is in the custody of or under supervision of the division.

If an adoptive resource has not been identified for a child, this fact shall not be a relevant consideration for determining whether grounds exist for the termination of parental rights in specified cases. However, the division must make efforts to place a child whose parents have had their parental rights terminated with an adoptive family or guardianship. The division must file a report with the court every six months showing their efforts to place a child with an adoptive family or guardianship.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this would require the juvenile court to make certain findings when it determines that parents have hurt their child. This is meant to ensure that Missouri kids are safe. Courts want to move to permanency more quickly, but a lot of kids do not get placed because of being in a home where the kids have been abused.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Kelley and the Department of Social Services.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.