

### SENATE BILL No. 259

DIGEST OF SB 259 (Updated February 15, 2021 10:18 am - DI 136)

**Citations Affected:** IC 29-3; IC 31-10; IC 31-17; IC 31-19; IC 31-27.

**Synopsis:** Parents with disabilities. Specifies that it is the policy of the state to recognize the importance of family and children, including the parenting rights of a parent, regardless of whether the parent has a parenting rights of a parent, regardless of whether the parent has a disability. Provides that the right of a person with a disability to parent the person's child may not be denied or restricted solely because the person has a disability. Defines the term "reasonable accommodation". Establishes procedures to be used in proceedings concerning: (1) custody; (2) parenting time; (3) adoption; (4) foster care; and (5) guardianship; when a parent, prospective parent, prospective foster parent, or prospective guardian is a person with a disability.

Effective: July 1, 2021.

# Niezgodski, Ford Jon

January 11, 2021, read first time and referred to Committee on Family and Children

February 15, 2021, amended, reported favorably — Do Pass.



First Regular Session of the 122nd General Assembly (2021)

PRINTING CODE. Amendments: Whenever an existing statute (or a section of the Indiana Constitution) is being amended, the text of the existing provision will appear in this style type, additions will appear in this style type, and deletions will appear in this style type.

Additions: Whenever a new statutory provision is being enacted (or a new constitutional provision adopted), the text of the new provision will appear in **this style type**. Also, the word **NEW** will appear in that style type in the introductory clause of each SECTION that adds a new provision to the Indiana Code or the Indiana Constitution.

Conflict reconciliation: Text in a statute in *this style type* or *this style type* reconciles conflicts between statutes enacted by the 2020 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

## **SENATE BILL No. 259**

A BILL FOR AN ACT to amend the Indiana Code concerning family law and juvenile law.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana:

1	SECTION 1. IC 29-3-5-4, AS AMENDED BY P.L.194-2017,
2	SECTION 7, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
3	JULY 1, 2021]: Sec. 4. (a) The court shall appoint as guardian a
4	qualified person or persons most suitable and willing to serve, having
5	due regard to the following:
6	(1) Any request made by a person alleged to be an incapacitated
7	person, including designations in a durable power of attorney
8	under IC 30-5-3-4(a).
9	(2) Any request made for a minor by:
0	(A) a parent of the minor; or
1	(B) a de facto custodian of the minor, including a designation
12	in a power of attorney under IC 30-5-3-4(b) or IC 30-5-3-4(c).
13	(3) Any request contained in a will or other written instrument.
14	(4) A designation of a standby guardian under IC 29-3-3-7.
15	(5) Any request made by a minor who is at least fourteen (14)
16	years of age.
17	(6) Any request made by the spouse of the alleged incapacitated



1	person.
2	(7) The relationship of the proposed guardian to the individual for
3	whom guardianship is sought.
4	(8) Any person acting for the incapacitated person under a
5	durable power of attorney.
6	(9) The best interest of the incapacitated person or minor and the
7	property of the incapacitated person or minor.
8	(b) Section 4.1 of this chapter applies when a prospective
9	guardian is a person with a disability.
10	SECTION 2. IC 29-3-5-4.1 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE
11	AS A <b>NEW</b> SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY
12	1, 2021]: Sec. 4.1. (a) This section applies to a proceeding to appoint
13	a guardian for a minor or an incapacitated person when a
14	prospective guardian is a person with a disability.
15	(b) As used in this section, "disability" has the meaning set forth
16	in 42 U.S.C. 12102.
17	(c) As used in this section, "reasonable accommodation" means
18	a change in the way policies are applied and services are usually
19	provided that may assist a guardian with a disability in the
20	effective use of techniques and other alternative methods to enable
21	the guardian to discharge the responsibilities of the guardianship
22	as successfully as a guardian who does not have a disability.
23	(d) A court may not refuse to appoint a person with a disability
24	as a guardian if the person is otherwise the most qualified and
25	suitable guardian as described in section 4 of this chapter.
26	(e) If a person alleges that a prospective guardian's disability
27	will have a detrimental effect on the minor child or incapacitated
28	person, the person making the allegation bears the burden of
29	establishing by clear and convincing evidence that the guardian's
30	disability endangers or will likely endanger the health, safety, or
31	welfare of the minor child or incapacitated person.
32	(f) If a person makes the showing described in subsection (e), the
33	prospective guardian with a disability may present rebuttal
34	evidence demonstrating that the implementation of a reasonable
35	accommodation will alleviate the issues described in subsection (e).
36	A court may award guardianship to a person with a disability on
37	the condition that the guardian implement a reasonable
38	accommodation.
39	(g) If a court denies the guardianship of a person with a
40 41	disability, the court shall make specific written findings: (1) setting forth the basis for its determination; and

(2) explaining why the reasonable accommodation is



1	insufficient to award the guardianship.
2	SECTION 3. IC 29-3-5-5, AS AMENDED BY P.L.194-2017,
3	SECTION 8, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
4	JULY 1, 2021]: Sec. 5. (a) The following are entitled to consideration
5	for appointment as a guardian under section 4 of this chapter in the
6	order listed:
7	(1) A person designated in a durable power of attorney.
8	(2) A person designated as a standby guardian under IC 29-3-3-7.
9	(3) The spouse of an incapacitated person.
10	(4) An adult child of an incapacitated person.
11	(5) A parent of an incapacitated person, or a person nominated by
12	will of a deceased parent of an incapacitated person or by any
13	writing signed by a parent of an incapacitated person and attested
14	to by at least two (2) witnesses, or in a power of attorney of a
15	living parent of an incapacitated person under IC 30-5-3-4(c).
16	(6) A parent of a minor, a de facto custodian of a minor, or a
17	person nominated:
18	(A) by will of a deceased parent or a de facto custodian of a
19	minor; or
20	(B) by a power of attorney of a living parent or a de facto
21	custodian of a minor.
22	(7) Any person related to an incapacitated person by blood or
23	marriage with whom the incapacitated person has resided for
24	more than $six (6)$ months before the filing of the petition.
25	(8) A person nominated by the incapacitated person who is caring
26	for or paying for the care of the incapacitated person.
27	(b) With respect to persons having equal priority, the court shall
28	select the person it considers best qualified to serve as guardian. The
29	court, acting in the best interest of the incapacitated person or minor,
30	may pass over a person having priority and appoint a person having a
31	lower priority or no priority under this section. Section 4.1 of this
32	chapter applies to this subsection if a person having equal priority
33	is a person with a disability.
34	SECTION 4. IC 31-10-2-1 IS AMENDED TO READ AS
35	FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2021]: Sec. 1. It is the policy of this
36	state and the purpose of this title to:
37	(1) recognize the importance of family and children in our society,
38	including the parenting rights of a parent, regardless of
39	whether the parent has a disability;
40	(2) recognize the responsibility of the state to enhance the
41	viability of children and family in our society;
42	(3) acknowledge the responsibility each person owes to the other;



1	(4) strengthen family life by assisting parents to fulfill their
2	parental obligations;
3	(5) ensure that children within the juvenile justice system are
4	treated as persons in need of care, protection, treatment, and
5	rehabilitation;
6	(6) remove children from families only when it is in the child's
7	best interest or in the best interest of public safety;
8	(7) provide for adoption as a viable permanency plan for children
9	who are adjudicated children in need of services;
10	(8) provide a juvenile justice system that protects the public by
11	enforcing the legal obligations that children have to society and
12	society has to children;
13	(9) use diversionary programs when appropriate;
14	(10) provide a judicial procedure that:
15	(A) ensures fair hearings;
16	(B) recognizes and enforces the legal rights of children and
17	their parents; and
18	(C) recognizes and enforces the accountability of children and
19	parents;
20	(11) promote public safety and individual accountability by the
21	imposition of appropriate sanctions; and
22	(12) provide a continuum of services developed in a cooperative
23	effort by local governments and the state.
24	SECTION 5. IC 31-10-2-3 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE
25	AS A <b>NEW</b> SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY
26	1, 2021]: Sec. 3. (a) The right of a person with a disability to parent
27	the person's child may not be denied or restricted solely because
28	the person has a disability.
29	(b) The department of child services shall implement
30	appropriate training programs conducted by a person with a
31	disability to educate departmental employees in the rights and
32	capabilities of persons with disabilities.
33	SECTION 6. IC 31-17-2-8.1 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE
34	AS A <b>NEW</b> SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY
35	1, 2021]: Sec. 8.1. (a) This section applies to a custody proceeding,
36	including a proceeding to modify custody where one (1) or more
37	parents have a disability.
38	(b) As used in this section, "disability" has the meaning set forth
39	in 42 U.S.C. 12102.
40	(c) As used in this section, "reasonable accommodation" means

a change in the way policies are applied and services are usually

provided that may assist a parent with a disability in the effective



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- use of techniques and other alternative methods to enable the parent to discharge parental responsibilities as successfully as a parent who does not have a disability.
- (d) A court may not deny or restrict custody because one (1) or more parents are persons with a disability, if the court finds under section 8 of this chapter that custody is otherwise in the best interests of the child.
- (e) If a person alleges that a parent's disability will have a detrimental effect on a child, the person making the allegation bears the burden of establishing by clear and convincing evidence that the parent's disability endangers or will likely endanger the health, safety, or welfare of the child.
- (f) If a person makes the showing described in subsection (e), the parent with a disability may present rebuttal evidence demonstrating that the implementation of a reasonable accommodation will alleviate the issues described in subsection (e). A court may award custody to a parent with a disability on the condition that the parent implement a reasonable accommodation.
- (g) If a court denies or restricts the custody of a parent with a disability, the court shall make specific written findings:
  - (1) setting forth the basis for its determination; and
  - (2) explaining why the reasonable accommodation is insufficient to grant unrestricted custody.

SECTION 7. IC 31-17-4-1, AS AMENDED BY P.L.223-2019, SECTION 3, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2021]: Sec. 1. (a) Subject to subsections (d) and (e) and subject to section 1.1 of this chapter, a parent not granted custody of the child is entitled to reasonable parenting time rights unless the court finds, after a hearing, that parenting time by the noncustodial parent might endanger the child's physical health or significantly impair the child's emotional development.

- (b) The court may interview the child in chambers to assist the court in determining the child's perception of whether parenting time by the noncustodial parent might endanger the child's physical health or significantly impair the child's emotional development.
- (c) The court may permit counsel to be present at the interview. If counsel is present:
  - (1) a record may be made of the interview; and
  - (2) the interview may be made part of the record for purposes of appeal.
- (d) Except as provided in subsection (e), if a court grants parenting time rights to a person who has been convicted of:



1	(1) child molesting (IC 35-42-4-3); or
2	(2) child exploitation (IC 35-42-4-4(b) or IC 35-42-4-4(c));
3	there is a rebuttable presumption that the parenting time with the child
4	must be supervised.
5	(e) If a court grants parenting time rights to a person who has been
6	convicted of:
7	(1) child molesting (IC 35-42-4-3); or
8	(2) child exploitation (IC 35-42-4-4(b) or IC 35-42-4-4(c));
9	within the previous five (5) years, the court shall order that the
10	parenting time with the child must be supervised.
11	SECTION 8. IC 31-17-4-1.1 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE
12	AS A NEW SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY
13	1, 2021]: Sec. 1.1. (a) This section applies to a proceeding to
14	determine or modify parenting time rights where one (1) or more
15	parents have a disability.
16	(b) As used in this section, "disability" has the meaning set forth
17	in 42 U.S.C. 12102.
18	(c) As used in this section, "reasonable accommodation" means
19	a change in the way policies are applied and services are usually
20	provided that may assist a parent with a disability in the effective
21	use of techniques and other alternative methods to enable the
22	parent to discharge parental responsibilities as successfully as a
23	parent who does not have a disability.
24	(d) A court may not deny or unreasonably restrict parenting
25	time because one (1) or more parents are persons with a disability,
26	if the parent is otherwise entitled to parenting time under section
27	1 of this chapter.
28	(e) If a person alleges that a parent's disability might endanger
29	the child's physical health or significantly impair the child's
30	emotional development, the person making the allegation bears the
31	burden of establishing by clear and convincing evidence that the
32	parent's disability might endanger the child's physical health or
33	significantly impair the child's emotional development.
34	(f) If a person makes the showing described in subsection (e), the
35	parent with a disability may present rebuttal evidence
36	demonstrating that the implementation of a reasonable
37	accommodation will alleviate the issues described in subsection (e).
38	A court may award parenting time to a parent with a disability on
39	the condition that the parent implement a reasonable
40	accommodation.
41	(g) If a court denies or unreasonably restricts the parenting time
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of a parent with a disability, the court shall make specific written



1	findings:
2	(1) setting forth the basis for its determination; and
3	(2) explaining why the reasonable accommodation is
4	insufficient to grant parenting time, or to grant parenting
5	time that is not unreasonably restricted.
6	SECTION 9. IC 31-19-11-1, AS AMENDED BY P.L.142-2020,
7	SECTION 38, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
8	JULY 1, 2021]: Sec. 1. (a) Whenever the court has heard the evidence
9	and finds that:
10	(1) the adoption requested is in the best interest of the child;
11	(2) the petitioner or petitioners for adoption are of sufficient
12	ability to rear the child and furnish suitable support and
13	education;
14	(3) the report of the investigation and recommendation under
15	IC 31-19-8-5 has been filed;
16	(4) the attorney or agency arranging an adoption has filed with the
17	court an affidavit prepared by the state department of health under
18	IC 31-19-5-16 indicating whether a man is entitled to notice of the
19	adoption because the man has registered with the putative father
20	registry in accordance with IC 31-19-5;
21	(5) proper notice arising under subdivision (4), if notice is
22	necessary, of the adoption has been given;
23	(6) the attorney or agency has filed with the court an affidavit
24	prepared by the state department of health under:
25	(A) IC 31-19-6 indicating whether a record of a paternity
26	determination; or
27	(B) IC 16-37-2-2(g) indicating whether a paternity affidavit
28	executed under IC 16-37-2-2.1;
29	has been filed in relation to the child;
30	(7) proper consent, if consent is necessary, to the adoption has
31	been given;
32	(8) the petitioner for adoption is not prohibited from adopting the
33	child as the result of an inappropriate criminal history described
34	in subsection (c) or (d); and
35	(9) the person, licensed child placing agency, or local office that
36	has placed the child for adoption has provided the documents and
37	other information required under IC 31-19-17 to the prospective
38	adoptive parents;
39	the court shall grant the petition for adoption and enter an adoption
10	decree

(b) A court may not grant an adoption unless the state department of health's affidavit under IC 31-19-5-16 is filed with the court as



provided under subsection (a)(4).

- (c) A juvenile adjudication for an act listed in IC 31-9-2-84.8 that would be a felony if committed by an adult, a conviction of a misdemeanor related to the health and safety of a child, or a conviction of a felony not listed in IC 31-9-2-84.8 by a petitioner for adoption or household member is a permissible basis for the court to deny the petition for adoption. In addition, the court may not grant an adoption if a petitioner for adoption has been convicted of a nonwaivable offense under IC 31-9-2-84.8. However, the court is not prohibited from granting an adoption based upon a felony conviction for:
  - (1) a felony under IC 9-30-5;
    - (2) battery (IC 35-42-2-1);
    - (3) criminal recklessness (IC 35-42-2-2) as a felony;
- (4) criminal confinement (IC 35-42-3-3);
  - (5) arson (IC 35-43-1-1);
  - (6) nonsupport of a dependent child (IC 35-46-1-5);
  - (7) operating a motorboat while intoxicated (IC 35-46-9-6) as a felony;
  - (8) a felony involving a weapon under IC 35-47; or
- (9) a felony relating to controlled substances under IC 35-48-4; if the date of the conviction did not occur within the immediately preceding five (5) year period.
- (d) A court may not grant an adoption if the petitioner is a sex or violent offender (as defined in IC 11-8-8-5) or a sexually violent predator (as defined in IC 35-38-1-7.5).
- (e) Section 1.1 of this chapter applies when one (1) or more petitioners is a person with a disability.

SECTION 10. IC 31-19-11-1.1 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE AS A **NEW** SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2021]: **Sec. 1.1. (a) This section applies to a petition for adoption when one (1) or more petitioners are persons with a disability.** 

- (b) As used in this section, "disability" has the meaning set forth in 42 U.S.C. 12102.
- (c) As used in this section, "reasonable accommodation" means a change in the way policies are applied and services are usually provided that may assist a parent with a disability in the effective use of techniques and other alternative methods to enable the parent to discharge parental responsibilities as successfully as a parent who does not have a disability.
- (d) A court may not deny a petition for adoption because one (1) or more petitioners are persons with a disability, if the court finds



1	under section 1 of this chapter that:
2	(1) adoption is otherwise in the best interests of the child;
3	(2) the petitioner or petitioners for adoption have sufficient
4	ability to rear the child and furnish suitable support and
5	education;
6	(3) the other prerequisites described in section 1 of this
7	chapter have been met; and
8	(4) the petitioner or petitioners are not otherwise prohibited
9	from adopting.
10	(e) If a person alleges that a petitioner's disability:
11	(1) will have a detrimental effect on a child; or
12	(2) makes the petitioner or petitioners unable to rear the child
13	and furnish suitable support and education;
14	the person making the allegation bears the burden of establishing
15	the allegation by clear and convincing evidence.
16	(f) If a person makes the showing described in subsection (e), the
17	petitioner or petitioners with a disability may present rebuttal
18	evidence demonstrating that the implementation of a reasonable
19	accommodation will alleviate the issues described in subsection (e).
20	A court shall consider the availability of a reasonable
21	accommodation in making its determination.
22	(g) If a court denies a petition for adoption by a petitioner or
23	petitioners with a disability, the court shall make specific written
24	findings:
25	(1) setting forth the basis for its determination; and
26	(2) explaining why the reasonable accommodation is
27	insufficient to grant the petition.
28	SECTION 11. IC 31-27-2-1, AS AMENDED BY P.L.128-2012,
29	SECTION 93, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
30	JULY 1, 2021]: Sec. 1. The department shall perform the following
31	duties:
32	(1) Administer the licensing and monitoring of child caring
33	institutions, foster family homes, group homes, and child placing
34	agencies in accordance with this article.
35	(2) Ensure that a criminal history check of an applicant is
36	conducted under IC 31-9-2-22.5 before issuing a license.
37	(3) Subject to section 1.1 of this chapter, provide for the
38	issuance, denial, and revocation of licenses.
39	(4) Cooperate with governing bodies of child caring institutions,
4.0	
40	foster family homes, group homes, and child placing agencies and

(5) Prepare at least biannually a directory of licensees, except for



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1	foster family homes, with a description of the program capacity
2	and type of children served that will be distributed to the
3	legislature, licensees, and other interested parties as a public
4	document.
5	(6) Deposit all license application fees collected under section 2
6	of this chapter in the department of child services child care fund
7	established by IC 31-25-2-16.
8	SECTION 12. IC 31-27-2-1.1 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA
9	CODE AS A <b>NEW</b> SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS
10	[EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2021]: Sec. 1.1. (a) This section applies to the

who is a person with a disability.

(b) As used in this section, "disability" has the meaning set forth in 42 U.S.C. 12102.

issuance of a license to operate a foster family home to an applicant

- (c) As used in this section, "reasonable accommodation" means a change in the way policies are applied and services are usually provided that may assist a foster parent with a disability in the effective use of techniques and other alternative methods to enable the parent to discharge parental responsibilities as successfully as a foster parent who does not have a disability.
- (d) The department may not deny an application for a license to operate a foster family home because the applicant is a person with a disability, if the applicant is otherwise qualified and entitled to the license.
- (e) If a person alleges that an applicant's disability will have a detrimental effect on the applicant's ability to operate a foster family home, the person making the allegation bears the burden of establishing by clear and convincing evidence that the applicant's disability endangers or will likely endanger the health, safety, or welfare of a child.
- (f) If a person makes the showing described in subsection (e), the applicant with a disability may present rebuttal evidence demonstrating that the implementation of a reasonable accommodation will alleviate the issues described in subsection (e). The department may issue a license to operate a foster family home to an applicant with a disability on the condition that the applicant implement a reasonable accommodation.
- (g) If the department refuses to issue a license to operate a foster family home to an applicant with a disability, the department shall make specific written findings:
  - (1) setting forth the basis for the denial; and
  - (2) explaining why the reasonable accommodation is



1 insufficient to permit issuance of the license.



### COMMITTEE REPORT

Madam President: The Senate Committee on Family and Children Services, to which was referred Senate Bill No. 259, has had the same under consideration and begs leave to report the same back to the Senate with the recommendation that said bill be AMENDED as follows:

Page 1, delete lines 1 through 17.

Page 2, delete lines 1 through 37.

Page 3, line 29, delete ""supportive guardianship services" and insert ""reasonable accommodation".

Page 3, line 30, after "means" insert "a change in the way policies are applied and".

Page 3, line 30, after "services" insert "are usually provided".

Page 4, line 3, delete "supportive" and insert "a reasonable accommodation".

Page 4, line 4, delete "guardianship services".

Page 4, delete lines 7 through 9 and insert "a reasonable accommodation.".

Page 4, line 13, delete "of".

Page 4, line 14, delete "supportive guardianship services".

Page 5, delete lines 6 through 42.

Page 6, delete lines 1 through 32.

Page 7, line 39, delete ""supportive parenting services" and insert ""reasonable accommodation".

Page 7, line 40, after "means" insert "a change in the way policies are applied and".

Page 7, line 40, after "services" insert "are usually provided".

Page 8, line 13, delete "supportive parenting" and insert "a reasonable accommodation".

Page 8, line 14, delete "services".

Page 8, line 16, delete "supportive parenting services. The court" and insert "a reasonable accommodation.".

Page 8, delete lines 17 through 18.

Page 8, line 22, delete "of".

Page 8, line 23, delete "supportive parenting services".

Page 9, line 19, delete ""supportive parenting services"" and insert ""reasonable accommodation"".

Page 9, line 20, after "means" insert "a change in the way policies are applied and".

Page 9, line 20, after "services" insert "are usually provided".

Page 9, line 36, delete "supportive parenting" and insert "a



### reasonable accommodation".

Page 9, line 37, delete "services".

Page 9, line 39, delete "supportive parenting services." and insert "a reasonable accommodation.".

Page 9, delete lines 40 through 41.

Page 10, line 4, delete "of".

Page 10, line 5, delete "supportive parenting services".

Page 11, line 37, delete ""supportive parenting services" and insert ""reasonable accommodation".

Page 11, line 38, after "means" insert "a change in the way policies are applied and".

Page 11, line 38, after "services" insert "are usually provided".

Page 12, line 19, delete "supportive" and insert "a reasonable accommodation".

Page 12, line 20, delete "parenting services".

Page 12, line 21, delete "supportive parenting" and insert "a reasonable accommodation".

Page 12, line 22, delete "services".

Page 12, line 27, delete "of".

Page 12, line 28, delete "supportive parenting services".

Page 13, line 17, delete ""supportive parenting services" and insert ""reasonable accommodation".

Page 13, line 18, after "means" insert "a change in the way policies are applied and".

Page 13, line 18, after "services" insert "are usually provided".

Page 13, line 34, delete "supportive parenting" and insert "a reasonable accommodation".

Page 13, line 35, delete "services".

Page 13, line 38, delete "supportive parenting services. The department shall" and insert "a reasonable accommodation.".

Page 13, delete lines 39 through 40.

Page 14, line 3, delete "of".

Page 14, line 4, delete "supportive parenting services".

Page 14, delete lines 6 through 38.

Renumber all SECTIONS consecutively.

and when so amended that said bill do pass.

(Reference is to SB 259 as introduced.)

GROOMS, Chairperson

Committee Vote: Yeas 9, Nays 0.

