

HCS HBs 1123 & 1221 -- PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

SPONSOR: Kelly (141)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Judiciary by a vote of 8 to 1.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 1123.

The bill changes the age threshold for abandoned infant or abandoned child from one year to three years old and sets a time frame of 60 days prior to a petition of termination of parental rights to be considered for willful, substantial, and continual neglect by the parent clarifying current language. This bill adds felonies in Chapters 565, 567, and 568, RSMo, to the current felony chapters for which a parent, if guilty and the victim is a child, shall lose parental rights, along with if the child has been in foster care for 15 months out of the previous 22 months (Section 211.447, RSMo).

The bill repeals payment for adoption legal fees by the prospective adoptive parents for a birth parent and allows the court to determine if representation is needed for the birth parent in an adoption proceedings (Section 453.030).

Currently, consent to the adoption of a child is required by a parent unless the child is under the age of one and the parent, for at least six months, has neglected to provide the child with necessary care and protection. This bill changes the age from one to three (Section 453.040).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this is to help place more of Missouri's kids in homes and it will help Missouri's backlog of adoption cases. This allows guardians ad litem to petition for termination of parental rights. We want to make sure foster kids have a place to call home. There is a family first program and that uses e-funding to pay for families' attorneys in adoption proceedings and they are trying to address this on the county level. It is very stressful for adoptees and everyone involved when adoptions and terminations of parental rights take years to process.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Kelly; Arnie C.

Dienoff; and the Department of Social Services.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill submitted written testimony, which can be found online.

Testifying against the bill was Ruth Ehresman, Vision For Children At Risk.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.