
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6336

AN ACT CONCERNING KINSHIP CARE.

SUMMARY:

This bill gives the Department of Children and Families (DCF) commissioner authority to waive any standard for separate bedrooms and room-sharing arrangements (see BACKGROUND) when placing a child in foster care with an unlicensed relative. Under current law and the bill, the commissioner is barred from waiving any standard or procedure related to safety. Any such placement must otherwise be in the child's best interest.

It also requires DCF to (1) report to the Superior Court, rather than simply make a determination on the appropriateness of a placement, when the court has identified a relative who might serve as a child's foster parent or temporary custodian and (2) convene a working group to determine how to maximize kinship care for children in the department's care and custody.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2011; except for the working group provision, which is effective upon passage.

REPORT TO THE COURT

By law, the Superior Court must do a number of things at a preliminary hearing on a temporary custody order, order to appear, or the first hearing on a petition regarding a neglected, uncared for, or dependent child or youth. Among them is to identify any relative, related either by blood or marriage, living in the state who might serve as a licensed foster parent or temporary custodian and order the DCF commissioner to investigate the appropriateness of placing a child with such a relative. The bill requires the commissioner to report to the court within 30 days of the hearing, rather than simply make a determination on the matter within that timeframe.

KINSHIP CARE WORKING GROUP

By October 1, 2011, the DCF commissioner must convene a working group to examine DCF practices and policies that impact kinship care. The working group must report by January 1, 2012 to the Human Services Committee and Select Committee on Children. Using existing resources, the group must consider agency regulations, cultural competence in recruiting relative homes, outreach practices, and family conferencing. Its report must summarize existing policies and practices impacting kinship care, and propose recommendations for increasing it.

BACKGROUND

Children's Bedroom Regulations

Under current DCF regulations, no child age three or older is permitted to share a bedroom with another child of the opposite sex or with one of the same sex who is a disparate age. No child over age one can share a room with an adult without the department's permission (Conn. Agencies Reg. § 17-145-139(a)(6)).

Legislative History

On April 21, the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee reported a substitute bill eliminating a provision in the original file (File 388) that exempted DCF from requiring that a child placed with a relative must have a separate bedroom. The Finance Committee's substitute allows DCF to waive the requirement.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Select Committee on Children

Joint Favorable
Yea 12 Nay 0 (03/03/2011)

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 18 Nay 0 (03/22/2011)

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 52 Nay 0 (04/21/2011)