

Approved: February 22, 2011
Date

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 17, 2011

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Wolf at 9:08 a.m., February 17, 2011, in Room 142S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Chairperson Kiegerl (excused).

Committee Staff Present:

Martha Dorsey, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Jay Hall, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Renaë Jefferies, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
June Christensen, Committee Assistant

Conferees:

Heather Morgan, Public Affairs Office, United Methodist Youthville
Mark Hunt, Parent
Tanya Keys, Director of Children and Family Services, Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS)
Kathy Winters, Grandparent Advocate
Reverend Fred and Sadie Carpenter, Written Testimony

Others Attending: See attached list.

Chairperson Wolf said the Committee will be hearing testimony on **HB 2105, children in need of care; relating to removal of child from parent's custody**, today. Anything that needs to come before the Committee will be through him, and he will be working with leadership. They have assured him that they will work with the Committee to get timely action.

Martha Dorsey, Kansas Legislative Research Department, briefly explained **HB 2105** and how it had come about. She distributed copies of the *Report of the Joint Committee on Children's Issues to the 2010 Kansas Legislature* and said the present bill was a version of previous 2010 HB 2494 that would have prevented removal of a child(ren) from parental custody unless there was a felony conviction for either parent (Attachment 1). A portion of that bill was removed, and the current bill only addresses the removal of children from parental custody due to being homeless.

Vice Chairperson Wolfe opened the hearing on **HB2105**.

Heather Morgan, Public Affairs Officer for United Methodist Youthville, presented testimony in support of **HB 2105** (Attachment 2). She noted that rather than removing the child, it would be better policy to help the family with living arrangements and jobs.

Mark Hunt, parent, presented testimony and spoke in favor of the bill but said it contained too many loopholes that would allow children to be taken from the home and not returned after investigation (Attachment 3). He cited personal experience with one of his children being removed and still in the custody of a questionable party.

Tanya Keys, Director of Children and Family Services for the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS), extended her wish for Chairperson Kiegerl's recovery. She also spoke in favor of the proposed bill, noting that if only the issue of homelessness is apparent, that is not a reason to remove the child(ren) unless there are other issues that would be harmful (Attachment 4).

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
Room 142S, Statehouse, 9 a.m., February 17, 2011

Representative Gatewood questioned if the increase from 10 to 14 days for return of the children, would be a problem, and Ms. Keys said that change should not be.

Representative Brunk said he realized the overwhelming need for individual help and said the Legislature is trying to make changes. He requested a follow-up for the previous conferee's problems, which Ms. Keys will do.

Kathy Winters, grandparent advocate, addressed the Committee and said she was also in support of the bill but agreed with Mr. Hunt that the provisions were not enough. She presented testimony and cited an example of her failed attempts to get custody of a grandchild (Attachment 5).

Written testimony was presented by Reverend Fred and Sadie Carpenter (Attachment 6).

Chairperson Wolf reiterated that time is of the essence in getting legislation passed and that the Committee is aware of the problems but only has a limited amount of time to address all the concerns. He also said if the Committee members had issues to be considered, he would attempt to address them but stressed a simple approach must be used. Next week will be the last week the Committee can have a hearing, as the Legislature will not be meeting for most of April.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 22, at 9 a.m., Room 142S, and the hearing on **HB 2105, children in need of care; relating to removal of child from parent's custody**, will be held.

Chairperson Wolf adjourned the meeting at 9:35 a.m.