

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lisa Benlon at 3:30 p.m. on March 6, 2002 in Room 231-N of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Vice Chairman, Carl Krehbiel (E)

Committee staff present: Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research
Jim Wilson, Revisor of Statutes
Renaë Jefferies, Revisor of Statutes
Dee Ann Woodson, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: None

Others attending: See attached list.

Chairperson Benlon called the Committee's attention to **HB 2956** for discussion and possible action. The Chair told the Committee members about a phone call she had received regarding a foster care family who wants to adopt their 15 year old foster daughter and she wants to be adopted. She related the family's concerns in regard to this bill as it is presently written in that if they go through with formal adoption, the girl would not be eligible for any assistance as far as post-secondary schooling. The Chair explained that this girl was very intelligent and wanted to go on to law school; however, the young lady was questioning whether to go through with the adoption and possibly lose out on the opportunity for \$40,000 worth of educational assistance in reaching her goal. Chairperson Benlon added that the SRS has given the family two weeks to make their decision before they remove the girl from the home due to not formalizing the adoption. She told the Committee that she was sharing this case with them as an additional consideration of a different angle that needs to be studied in working this proposed legislation.

Representative Sloan made a motion to table the bill, seconded by Representative Wells. The Chair called for a voice vote, and then division was requested with six (6) voting for the motion and seven (7) members voting against the motion. Representative Tanner abstained. The motion failed.

Representative Tanner stated that he had a lot of problems with this bill, part of which was the fiscal note; but also with some of the concepts of this bill. He said it was unfair to put adolescents in a position of having to choose between adoption and a scholarship.

Committee discussion continued regarding the fiscal note on this bill, and concerns that SRS had funds available that the legislators were not aware of. Representative Tanner was asked to explain what the Chaffee funds were and who was eligible for them. Representative Storm stated that the Committee was not saying all of the kids who "age out" of foster care would be eligible to take advantage of this program since their high school dropout rate was enormous. She added that most of these children had ever thought of the possibility that advanced training might be in their futures, and so with just this possibility she thought it would change for a lot of them their high school performance and dreams for themselves. She stated she did not see a great fiscal note.

General questions and discussion concerned funding issues and possible revenue sources, or possibly referring it back to LEPC for further study during the summer interim session. Representative Tanner suggested that this could possibly come under the programs that the Children's Cabinet embraces and that group falls under the SRS.

The Chair called the Committee's attention to page 2, line 15, of the bill which states, "The state board is authorized to receive any grants, gifts, contributions or bequests made for the purpose of supporting the tuition waiver program authorized by this section and to expend the same." Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research Department, explained to the Committee regarding the tobacco money that by statute it has to be spent for children's programs, and foster children 18 years of age and older would probably not qualify

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according to how the statutes are currently worded but that would have to be verified. The Committee's Revisor of Statutes, Jim Wilson, clarified the State Statute concerning the Children's Cabinet and how it is administered. Ms. Rampey added that the Cabinet has further narrowed the scope of responsibility to early childhood.

Representative Sloan expressed that there were already too many needs being financed by the tobacco money, and felt that this was simply a good idea, but not affordable. Representative Cook suggested a better way to go would be through tax incentives to help these kids out and give them jobs in order to succeed. She stated that she thought this bill went too far in relying on a lot of State money.

Representative Reardon talked about possibly tying in to the increased tuition that will be taking place which also means an increase in student aid. He said the surrounding states all have a lot higher tuition and student aid, and this year Kansas was going to have to raise theirs. He stated that the higher tuition was going to price out students who could not afford to go to school in Kansas. He reminded the Committee members that they were talking about a relative small number of students who would qualify. He suggested writing a letter to LEPC, and it could be done at the last minute constructed with a meeting at the rail. He also pointed out that Representative Pottorff, a member of this Committee, was the Chairperson of LEPC. He felt that this issue should be kept alive now since LEPC had expanded its role which now includes K-12 education as well as higher education.

Committee discussion continued with a clarification requested from the Board of Regents' representative, Dick Carter, on how the levels of tuition are reached.

Chairperson Benlon took the prerogative of adjourning the meeting at 4:10 p.m. The next meeting of the House Higher Committee will be on call of the Chair.

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