

MINUTES OF THE SENATE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dwayne Umbarger at 10:30 A.M. on February 3, 2005 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent: Senator Stephen Morris - excused

Committee staff present:

Jill Wolters, Senior Assistant, Revisor of Statutes
Alan Conroy, Director, Kansas Legislative Research Department
J. G. Scott, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Amy Deckard, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Audrey Dunkel, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Susan Kannarr, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Becky Krahl, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Matt Spurgin, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Robert Waller, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Judy Bromich, Administrative Analyst
Mary Shaw, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Senator John Vratil
Representative Oletha Faust-Goudeau
Senator Roger Reitz
William A. Dean, Silver Haired Legislature
Cindy D'Ercole, Senior Policy Analyst, Kansas Action for Children
Greta Reeves, Member, AARP Kansas
Michael Farmer, Executive Director, Kansas Catholic Conference
Kim Strunk, Grandparent, Altamont, Kansas
Marva Williams, Grandparent
Alice Kitchen, Family Friends
Candace A. Nelson, Founder of Guard Our Children, Mission, Kansas
Leann Hochstetler, Grandparent, Roeland Park, Kansas
Phyllis Smith, Grandparent
Alma Smith, Grandparent
Bessie Barnes, Grandparent
Joyce Strickland, Grandparent, Overland Park (written)
Margo Moore, Grandparent (written)
Craig Kaberline, Executive Director, Kansas Area Agencies on Aging Association (written)

Others attending:

See attached list.

Chairman Umbarger opened the public hearing on:

SB 62--Grandparents as foster parents program, established

The Chairman welcomed the following conferees on **SB 62**:

Senator John Vratil testified in support of **SB 62** (Attachment 1). He explained that the idea of the bill originated with the Kansas Silver Haired Legislature and was adopted at their annual meeting in October, 2003. Senator Vratil noted the bill would make it easier for grandparents to act in the role of foster parents in providing parental services to needy children. **SB 62** would require the Secretary of the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) to establish a grandparents as foster parents program within SRS.

Representative Oletha Faust-Goudeau testified in favor of **SB 62** (Attachment 2). Representative Faust-Goudeau mentioned that there is an urgent need for SB 62 in her district which is highly populated with a

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constituency of senior citizens and a large percentage are grandparents raising grandchildren and need additional financial assistance.

The hearing on **SB 62** was temporarily suspended. The Chairman opened the public hearing on:

SB 89--Payment of certain medical expenses of prisoners injured by a state officer or employee

Chairman Umbarger welcomed Senator Roger Reitz, who spoke in favor of **SB 89** (Attachment 3). Senator Reitz explained that **SB 89** has to do with responsibility of the State for performance of its employees. He mentioned that at the present time the county in which an altercation develops between a state law enforcement officer and a suspected miscreant pays for any medical bills resulting from injury inflicted on the latter. Senator Reitz noted that the officer acting in the line of duty should be totally supported by his or her employer.

Staff briefed the committee on the bill.

There being no further conferees to come before the committee, the Chairman closed the public hearing on **SB 89**.

The Chairman continued the public hearing on **SB 62**:

Staff briefed the committee on the bill.

Testimony continued as follows:

William A. Dean, Silver Haired Legislature, addressed **SB 62** and noted that the bill is needed to help senior citizens, often on limited income, who are taking care of their grandchildren (Attachment 4). Mr. Dean explained that **SB 62** would allow grandparents whose annual income is less than 130 percent of the federal poverty level to receive help such as learning parenting skills all over again from the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. He noted that the grandparents would need to know the kinds of help available and how to secure this help.

Cindy D'Ercole, Senior Policy Analyst, Kansas Action for Children, explained that Kansas Action for Children supports **SB 62** because it is clear that the unique challenges faced by this population create a need to revisit the policies and procedures designed for parent-child arrangements (Attachment 5). Ms. D'Ercole also noted and detailed in her testimony that although there is overwhelming support to address the needs of grandparents, there are also some limitations in this particular bill that must be pointed out.

Greeta Reeves, Member, AARP Kansas, spoke in support of **SB 62** and noted that grandparents raising grandchildren was not an isolated condition. She noted that the number of grandparents and other relatives raising grandchildren has been increasing rapidly over the past decade (Attachment 6).

Michael Farmer, Executive Director, Kansas Catholic Conference, the public policy office of the Catholic Church in Kansas, who spoke in support of **SB 62** (Attachment 7). Mr. Farmer explained that under current law, grandparents who are care givers for their grandchildren are not entitled to receive the same benefits provided to foster parents. In closing, Mr. Farmer mentioned that recognizing the benefits of children being raised by family and not by strangers, the Kansas Catholic Conference supports the bill.

Kim Strunk, Grandparent, Altamont, Kansas, testified in support of **SB 62** although at this time the bill would not benefit her family because she and her husband do not meet the age criteria (Attachment 8). Ms. Strunk emphasized that grandparents should be able to be "foster care" providers and reimbursed instead of traumatizing the children and removing them completely from their family members, who did not make poor choices, and placing them with strangers.

Marva Williams, Grandparent, spoke in favor of **SB 62** and mentioned that if her granddaughter was placed in a licensed non-relative foster home with a stranger, SRS would have paid the typical payment received for

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one child in foster care of \$570. Mrs. Williams explained that because her granddaughter was in a licensed foster home of a relative (hers), the only way she could be fully reimbursed as a licensed foster parent was if she also took a non-relative child (Attachment 9).

Alice Kitchen, Family Friends, testified in support of **SB 62**, and suggested amending the bill to include Title IV-E waivers that provide a monthly guardianship subsidy that is equal to or less than the current foster care payment, with approximately half of the cost born by the federal government. She also noted that federal support through waivers helped states promote subsidized guardianship as a permanency option for grandparent care givers (Attachment 10).

Candace A. Nelson, Founder of Guard Our Children, Mission, Kansas, testified in support of **SB 62** (Attachment 11). Ms. Nelson explained that she has always been her grandchildren's fostering parents. As a citizen, Ms. Nelson urged support of the bill in a swift manner and thus ensuring grandchildren the continuity of care they deserve by allowing the children to reside in the homes of their grandparents.

Leann Hochstetler, Grandparent, Roeland Park, Kansas, spoke in favor of **SB 62** (Attachment 12). Ms. Hochstetler mentioned that there many stories of grandparents who chose to raise their grandchildren rather than put them in foster care or place them up for adoption, making that same great sacrifice.

Phyllis Smith, Grandparent, testified in favor of **SB 62** and explained that she was thrust into the role of a parent six years ago (Attachment 13). Ms. Smith mentioned that financial hardships and burdens, as well as mental stress and anguish are part of the role.

Alma Smith, Grandparent, spoke in support of **SB 62** and mentioned that she has been taking care of four grandchildren (Attachment 14). Ms. Smith explained that she receives Social Security so she is on a fixed income which is hard for one person, but now she must provide for four growing children.

Bessie Barnes, Grandparent, spoke in support of **SB 62** and noted that she is an active grandparent raising two active grandsons (Attachment 15). Ms. Barnes mentioned that the hardships could be decreased if **SB 62** would be considered and how important the bill is to grandparents.

Written testimony was submitted on **SB 62** by:

Joyce Strickland, Grandparent, Overland Park (Attachment 16)

Margo Moore, Grandparent (Attachment 17)

Craig Kaberline, Executive Director, Kansas Area Agencies on Aging Association (Attachment 18)

The Chairman held the hearing open on **SB 62** and the hearing will be scheduled to be continued at a later date.

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for February 7, 2005.