

**SUBJECT:** Creating a voluntary temporary caregiver program for certain children

**COMMITTEE:** Human Services — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 6 ayes — Raymond, Frank, Klick, Miller, Swanson, Wu

1 nay — Rose

2 absent — Keough, Minjarez

**WITNESSES:** For — Wanda Brice, CASA of Collin County; Cecilia Wood, Center for the Preservation of American Ideals; Sarah Crockett, Texas CASA; Brandon Logan, Texas Public Policy Foundation; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Nicole Hudgens, Texas Values; Jennifer Allmon, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Thomas Parkinson)

Against — None

On — Elizabeth "Liz" Kromrei, Department of Family and Protective Services; Katherine Barillas, One Voice Texas; Kate Murphy, Texans Care for Children; Bee Moorhead, Texas Impact; Dimple Patel, TexProtects

**BACKGROUND:** Concerns have been raised about finding initial placements for children removed from their homes within the state's foster care system.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 1620 would require the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to establish a program allowing a child who was removed from the child's home to be placed with an approved voluntary temporary caregiver. DFPS would create an application and verification process to approve individuals to serve as voluntary temporary caregivers.

The verification process would include a background and criminal history record check for each caregiver, require each member of the caregiver's home to undergo a tuberculosis screening test, and include any other administrative procedure DFPS determined was necessary to ensure the

child's placement in a safe home. The department also would be required to verify that the caregiver:

- had a home with ample sleeping space;
- had a maximum of six children at home, including those receiving day care from the caregiver;
- agreed to nonphysical discipline;
- had any pets vaccinated; and
- maintained and submitted to DFPS proof of first aid and CPR training.

DFPS would require every voluntary temporary caregiver to receive four hours of training on child development and disciplinary techniques for children classified above a basic service level. The four hours of training would count toward the training required for a caregiver who applied to become a licensed or verified foster home.

A voluntary temporary caregiver would have to agree to care for a child for at least 14 days. If the child's caseworker determined it was in the child's best interest to remain longer in the voluntary temporary caregiver's care, the caseworker could, subject to the caregiver's agreement:

- allow the child to remain under the caregiver's care;
- designate the voluntary temporary caregiver as the caregiver of the child under a parental child safety placement agreement; or
- designate the voluntary temporary caregiver as a designated caregiver of the child.

The bill would not entitle a voluntary temporary caregiver to any reimbursement for care provided for the child. The caregiver would not be liable for the cost of any medical care the child received while placed with caregiver, which would be covered by existing health insurance provided for the child. A caregiver also would have to ensure that the child continued to attend his or her school of origin or attended another school chosen by the child's caseworker if the caseworker determined that it was

unsafe for the child to remain at the original school.

DFPS would publicize the voluntary temporary caregiver program and notify the parents of a child removed from home whether the child would be placed with a voluntary temporary caregiver.

The bill would allow a law enforcement or juvenile probation officer who took possession of a child to release the child to an approved voluntary temporary caregiver.

As soon as practicable after the effective date, the Health and Human Services executive commissioner would adopt rules to implement the bill's provisions, and DFPS would implement the voluntary temporary caregiver program.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2017.