

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 2225  
By: Parker  
Human Services  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Texas currently has approximately 6,100 children in state custody who are waiting for a permanent home and a loving family. Of these children, 2,400 await the end of the long and exhaustive adoption process and 3,700 are waiting to see if adoption is yet a possibility. Approximately 56 percent of children who "age out" of the state's care live in poverty within four years, and 40 percent never graduate from high school. Of the teenage girls who "age out" of the state's care, 60 percent become mothers within two years. Texas urgently needs to find a way to expedite the process and move more children into permanent homes.

C.S.H.B. 2225 requires the Department of Family and Protective Services to work with an appointed adoption review committee to review the Texas foster care system, report on obstacles identified, and make recommendations on how to eliminate such obstacles to permanent placement.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 2225 requires the Department of Family and Protective Services, in conjunction with the adoption review committee established by the bill, to conduct an extensive review of the foster care system to identify obstacles that impede the department's ability to find a permanent placement for foster children, including placement by adoption, and to develop ways to improve the foster care system by reducing the time a child is in the conservatorship of the department before being permanently placed, by reducing the number of children in the conservatorship of the department who are placed outside of their home county, and by enhancing the procedures for adopting foster children.

C.S.H.B. 2225 specifies that the adoption review committee is composed of nine members, three of whom have expertise in or a demonstrated commitment to adoption issues with one appointed by the governor, one appointed by the lieutenant governor, and one appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives, and six of whom are appointed by the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission as follows: an employee of the Department of Family and Protective Services; a representative from a licensed child-placing agency that provides adoption services; an adoption advocate; a foster care advocate; a representative from the Council on Adoptable Children of Texas; and an attorney with expertise in handling adoptions.

C.S.H.B. 2225 requires the department to submit a written report of the results of the review not later than December 1, 2010, to the governor, lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, the House Committee on Human Services, and the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. The bill requires the report to include a summary of the findings of the

review, a summary of the obstacles identified in the review that impede the department's ability to find permanent placements for foster children, recommendations of actions the department should take to eliminate such obstacles, and any legislative recommendations that would improve the foster care system.

C.S.H.B. 2225 specifies that the foster care review committee is abolished and this bill expires September 1, 2011.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the act does not receive the necessary vote, the act takes effect September 1, 2009.

**COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE**

C.S.H.B. 2225 differs from the original by renaming the foster care review committee as the adoption review committee. The substitute adds to the purposes for which the foster care system review is to be conducted the development of ways to improve the system by reducing the number of children in the conservatorship of the department who are placed outside of their home county.

C.S.H.B. 2225 differs from the original by providing for nine committee members, with six appointed by the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission and one each by the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives, rather than six committee members, with two each appointed by the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives. The substitute differs from the original by providing more specific requirements for the makeup of the committee and omitting a prohibition against service on the committee by a member of the legislature.