

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 502
By: West
Human Services
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Although pre-placement visits and the provision of a placement summary form are required when a child is placed in foster care to ensure that the parties involved are prepared for the placement, this practice is not mandated in the case of kinship placements. Interested parties observe that familiarity often is assumed when a child is placed with a relative but that unfortunately, despite the blood ties shared by the child and the caregiver, family members may not have had regular contact with the child or be familiar with the child's history.

The parties assert that a pre-placement visit would strengthen the stability of the placement by allowing an opportunity for both child and caregiver to determine whether the placement is appropriate and that a placement summary form would ensure that the caregiver is aware of all of the child's medical, education, and behavioral issues and needs so they can be appropriately met and so the caregiver is aware of what will be required of the caregiver. It also has been noted that provisions relating to the monetary assistance provided to such caregivers need to be revised.

S.B. 502 seeks to address these issues by amending current law relating to placement of children with certain relatives or other designated caregivers.

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

S.B. 502 amends the Family Code to require the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), before placing a child with a relative or other designated caregiver, to arrange a visit between the child and the proposed caregiver and to provide the proposed caregiver with a form, which may be the same form DFPS provides to nonrelative caregivers, containing information, to the extent it is available, about the child that would enhance continuity of care for the child, including the child's school information and educational needs; the child's medical, dental, and mental health care information; the child's social and family information; and any other information about the child DFPS determines will assist the proposed caregiver in meeting the child's needs. The bill authorizes DFPS to waive that requirement if the relative or other designated caregiver has a long-standing or significant relationship with the child and has provided care for the child at any time during the 12 months preceding the date of the proposed placement.

S.B. 502 specifies that the one-time cash payment provided to a caregiver under a caregiver assistance agreement on the initial placement of a child or a sibling group is capped at \$1,000 per child. The bill requires the payment for placement of a sibling group to be at least \$1,000 for the group but not more than \$1,000 for each child in the group. The bill specifies that its provisions relating to monetary assistance provided under a caregiver assistance agreement do not make an

appropriation nor require a specific appropriation and requires the new duty imposed on DFPS as a result of the bill to be performed through the appropriations provided by the legislature as part of existing DFPS responsibilities.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2013.