



Testimony before the
House Committee on Judiciary
on
SB 410- Establishing a CARE family pilot program for foster care

by

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

We appear as neutral on the major substance of this bill. However, it contains provisions concerning school finance that we oppose, and would urge the committee remove if the bill is advanced.

SB 410 would provide that if a foster CARE family established under the bill does not enroll the child in a school district, the family must notify the Secretary of DCF regarding the school and curriculum being used to educate such child, and would be reimbursed for actual educational expenses incurred up to the statewide average state aid per pupil (estimated at \$4,102). If there are insufficient funds, the requests for reimbursement would be considered in the order received when funds are available for such purpose.

KASB objects to this provision for the following reasons:

- We oppose public funding for non-public schools, particularly if there is no requirement that such schools meet any accreditation, accountability or financial transparency requirements.
- This bill requires the family notify the state regarding the school and curriculum, but is not required to make any report on academic progress. For example, there is no requirement that the student participate in any testing program such as the state assessments each public school student must take in reading, math, science and history/government.
- The bill provides up to over \$4,000 for educational expenses, but school or family does not have to show how that money is being used. Because there are no academic reporting requirements, the state will have no way to know if the funding is actually having a positive academic impact on the child.

SB 410 also provides that if a child placed with a foster CARE family is enrolled in a different school district than the one where the child has previously been enrolled, district funding be adjusted as follows:

First, for each month the child is no longer enrolled, the district shall pay to the state an amount equal to the general fund budget of the district, excluding moneys held in the special education and related services fund, the special retirement contributions fund, the capital outlay fund or the bond and interest fund of the school district, the proceeds of any tax levied by the school district and any federal funds, for the current school year divided by the total enrollment of such school district for the current school year divided by 12.

Second, for the months the child is enrolled in a different district, the new district would be paid an amount based on the same calculation above for the new district.

KASB objects to this provision for the following reasons:

- The funding is based on the average state aid each district receives, not the actual funding per child. A student in a high wealth district that receives little state aid will “transfer out” less money than a student in a low wealth districts that receives much more state aid. The same is true for the new district.
- The bill does not establish to what extent the transfer of the child would result in higher costs to the new district or reduce costs to the original district. If there is no difference in staffing or other costs, one district is receiving more funding that it needs and another district is losing money with no reduction in costs. Teacher salaries are contracted for one full school year.
- The bill is completely reversed from the philosophy of the block grants for all other students. When districts receive more students, they do not receive additional aid; and do not lose money if they lose enrollment.
- We believe this issue should be addressed under a new school finance formula to replace the block grants, not added piecemeal to the block grant system.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these issues.