

One Hundred Second Legislature - Second Session - 2012

Introducer's Statement of Intent

LB1149

Chairperson: Senator Kathy Campbell

Committee: Health and Human Services

Date of Hearing: February 02, 2012

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

LB 1149 provides that when a child is made a ward of the state the child shall be subject to the guardianship of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) or that department's designee. NDHHS or the designee shall have authority, by and with the assent of the court, to determine the care, placement, medical services, psychiatric services, training, and expenditures on behalf of each ward. Under LB 1149, NDHHS or the designee shall have the authority to perform all duties related to legal guardianship of said juvenile. The intent of this provision is to eliminate the duplication of work and inefficiencies present in the current child welfare case management scheme.

LB 1149 also creates the Child Welfare Caseload Estimating Committee. This Committee will use data provided by the Division of Children and Family Services of NDHHS regarding how many families were served by the division and the cost to provide these services for the most recent fiscal year to determine division funding for the following two years.

By estimating the number of children and families to be served by tracking historic numbers, the Governor, DHHS, and legislators would not only be in a better position to budget for the child welfare system as a whole but also monitor emerging trends and address challenges being faced by families and communities across Nebraska.

The Child Welfare Caseload Estimating Committee should increase fiscal accountability and should serve the children and taxpayers of Nebraska by creating a transparent system of child welfare funding.

LB 1149 provides that child welfare worker and child welfare supervisor caseloads will be in compliance with national best practice standards.

Child welfare caseloads in Nebraska are currently measured by number of “cases” or families on a caseload. Nationally recognized best practice standards advise that caseloads should be measured by the number of children on a caseload, not by the number of families.

All child welfare workers have a direct supervisor and these supervisors have huge responsibilities to consult with the child welfare workers and oversee the work done with the families. Supervisors cannot provide meaningful support and assistance to workers if these supervisors have an unmanageable workload.

Principal Introducer: _____

Senator Amanda McGill