

SUBJECT: Advisory committee on adoption of African-American children

COMMITTEE: Human Services — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Hilderbran, Naishtat, Davila, J. Jones, Krusee, Maxey, Wohlgemuth

0 nays

2 absent — Denny, Park

WITNESSES: For — Trudy Lawton, Metropolitan One Church, One Child; the Rev. William A. Purnell Jr. One Church, One Child; the Rev. James R. Whorton, Second Baptist Church and One Church, One Child.

Against — None

On — Pat Devin, Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Service

DIGEST: CSHB 2468 would authorize the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (PRS) to establish an advisory committee on promoting the adoption of and services to adoptable African-American children.

The committee would be composed of 12 members appointed by the PRS board, which would have to seek committee members who had a knowledge of and experience in community education, cultural relations, family support, counseling and parenting skills and education. At least six members would be members of the clergy.

Committee members would serve two-year terms and could be appointed for subsequent terms. The committee members would elect a presiding officer who would serve a two-year term and could be reelected.

PRS would be required to set the time and place of the first meeting of the committee. The committee would be required to meet at least quarterly.

PRS would be required to pay the expenses of the committee and would further be required to supply necessary personnel and supplies.

The committee would be required to:

- study, develop and evaluate programs and projects relating to community awareness and education, family support, counseling, parenting skills and education, and reform of the welfare system;
- consult with African-American churches and other African-American cultural and civic organizations; and
- report their findings to PRS at least annually and make recommendations for department programs and projects that would promote the adoption of and the provision of services to adoptable African-American children.

PRS could adopt rules to implement programs or projects recommended by the committee. The department could solicit, accept and use gifts and donations to implement programs or projects recommended by the committee.

PRS would be required to report to the Legislature by November 1 of each even-numbered year, starting in 1988. PRS would be required to make committee appointments by January 1, 1996.

The bill would take effect on September 1, 1995.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

The state has far too many children growing up in foster care who need families to adopt them. This bill would create a committee to address this problem as it affects African-American children in particular. The committee would complement the efforts of church organizations like One Church, One Child, organized in 36 states, including Texas, to facilitate adoptions between African-American children and African-American families. In Harris County alone there are 200 African-American children who could be adopted if appropriate families were found. CSHB 2468 would provide a framework for PRS to work with an advisory committee in order to promote adoptions of African-American children.

The committee would serve as a model for others who might wish to organize on behalf of foster children of a particular race or ethnic group. Foster care of a child costs the state approximately \$33 a day for Level 2 basic services. Efforts to move children off of foster care and into permanent care would greatly benefit both the children as well of saving the state millions of dollars in foster care assistance.

OPPONENTS
SAY: No apparent opposition

NOTES: The committee substitute would require that PRS make appointments to the advisory board and at least six appointees be members of the clergy. The committee substitute would also allow the committee's presiding officer to serve two years as presiding officer and move up the reporting dates by one month.

On April 27 the Senate passed SB 1487 by Zaffirini, which would prohibit state authorities from denying or delaying the placement of children with adoptive or foster families because the child is of a different race or ethnicity. The bill has been referred to the House Juvenile Justice and Family Issues Committee.