

One Hundred Second Legislature - Second Session - 2012

Introducer's Statement of Intent

LB961

Chairperson: Senator Kathy Campbell

Committee: Health and Human Services

Date of Hearing: January 26, 2012

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

The State of Nebraska has the legal responsibility for children in its custody and should maintain the decision making authority in direct case management of child welfare services;

Privatization of case management of child welfare services with service coordination and service delivery diminishes the authority of the State of Nebraska to set direction and establish leadership in child welfare reform.

Privatization of case management results in dependence on private entities for the provision of an essential specialized service that is extremely difficult to replace. As a result, the risk of a private entity abandoning the contract, either voluntarily or involuntarily, creates a very high risk to the entire system of child welfare services;

While arguably the system of case management historically has been underfunded, the additional funds put into case management as a result of privatization have gone solely to areas served by private entities without additional needed funds going to areas in which case management of child welfare services is provided directly by the Department of Health and Human Services;

Training and longevity of child welfare service case managers and caseworkers directly impact the safety, permanency, and well-being of children receiving child welfare services. Meaningful reform of the system can occur only when competent, skilled case managers and caseworkers educated in evidence-based child welfare best practice are providing care of and services to children and families and high-quality evidence to the courts relating to the best interests of the children;

Issues relating to case management, caseloads, placement, turnover, communication, and stability continue to have negative outcomes; and

The failure of the lead agency model in the Central, Western and Northern Service Areas devastated services for children and their families.

LB 961:

- Requires case management to be provided by DHHS on Sept. 1, 2012.
- Requires DHHS to develop case plans with specified services and actions for non-court and voluntary cases of children being placed in state custody.
- Requires the Children's Commission to include in its strategic plan a review of workload and compensation; requires average caseload per caseworker to be reduced by 10% annually until caseload is within standards established by the Child Welfare League of America.
- Reconfigures Central, Western, and Northern Service areas so that no judicial district is included in more than one service area.

- Provides that DHHS shall not extend existing contracts for services when those contracts terminate in 2014..
- Provides that lead agencies shall not be reinstated in the Central, Western, and Northern Service areas.

Principal Introducer: _____

Senator