

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 2120

As of February 21, 2000

Title: An act relating to the termination of stepparent liability for child support.

Brief Description: Limiting stepparent liability for child support.

Sponsors: Representatives Radcliff, Constantine, Carrell and Kessler.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor & Workforce Development: 2/22/2000.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Jack Brummel (786-7428)

Background: The family expense statute makes both parties to a marriage equally responsible for the necessary expenses of the family. It provides that the education of the children, including stepchildren, are chargeable upon the property of both husband and wife.

Under the statute, a court may terminate a stepparent's obligation to support stepchildren when a petition for dissolution or legal separation is filed and the stepparent moves to terminate support. The obligation to support stepchildren ceases when a decree of dissolution or legal separation is entered or upon death of the stepparent.

In 1979 the Legislature included stepparents within the definition of "responsible parent" in a statute authorizing the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to determine child support obligations.

Summary of Bill: A stepparent's obligation to support a stepchild under the family expense statute ends when a petition for dissolution or legal separation is filed. Stepparents are deleted from the definition of "responsible parent" in the statute authorizing DSHS to determine child support obligations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 21, 2000.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.