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HOUSE BILL NO. 443

Offered January 13, 2010

Prefiled January 12, 2010

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 63.2-1300 through 63.2-1303 of the Code of Virginia, relating to adoption assistance.

Patron—Toscano

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 63.2-1300 through 63.2-1303 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 63.2-1300. Purpose and intent of adoption assistance; eligibility.

The purpose of adoption assistance is to facilitate adoptive placements and ensure permanency for children with special needs. Adoption assistance ~~includes subsidy~~ may include Title IV-E maintenance payments, state-funded maintenance payments, state special services payments and nonrecurring expense payments made pursuant to requirements set forth in this chapter. A child with special needs is any child (i) in the custody of a local board that has the authority to place the child for adoption and consent thereto in accordance with the provisions of §§ 63.2-900, 63.2-903 and 63.2-1105 or (ii) in the custody of a licensed child-placing agency, for whom it has been determined that it is unlikely that the child will be adopted within a reasonable period of time due to one or more factors including, but not limited to:

A child with special needs is a child who is a citizen or legal resident of the United States who is unlikely to be adopted within a reasonable period of time due to one or more of the following factors:

1. Physical, mental or emotional condition existing prior to adoption;
2. Hereditary tendency, congenital problem or birth injury leading to substantial risk of future disability; or
3. Individual circumstances of the child related to age, racial or ethnic background or close relationship with one or more siblings.

A child with special needs will be eligible for adoption assistance if (i) the child cannot or should not be returned to the home of his parents and (ii) reasonable efforts to place the child in an appropriate adoptive home without the provision of adoption assistance have been unsuccessful. An exception may be made to the requirement that efforts be made to place the child in an adoptive home without the provision of adoption assistance when the child has developed significant emotional ties with his foster parents while in their care and that the foster parents wish to adopt the child.

Child with special needs shall also include a child for whom the factors set out in subdivision 1 or 2 are present at the time of adoption but are not diagnosed until after the final order of adoption is entered and no more than one year has elapsed.

§ 63.2-1301. Types of adoption assistance payments.

A. Title IV-E maintenance payments shall be made to the adoptive parents on behalf of an adopted child placed if it is determined that the child is a child with special needs and the child meets the requirements set forth in § 473 of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. § 673).

B. State-funded maintenance payments shall be made to the adoptive parents on behalf of an adopted child if it is determined that the child does not meet the requirements set forth in § 473 of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. § 673) but the child is a child with special needs. For this purpose of state-funded maintenance payments only, a child with special needs may include:

1. A child for whom the factors set forth in subdivision 1 or 2 of § 63.2-1300 are present at the time of adoption but are not diagnosed until after the final order of adoption, when no more than one year has elapsed from the date of diagnosis; or
2. A child who has lived with his foster parents for at least 12 months and has developed significant emotional ties with his foster parents while in their care, when the foster parents wish to adopt the child and state-funded maintenance payments are necessary to enable the adoption.

C. ~~Subsidy~~ State special services payments shall be made to the adoptive parents and other persons on behalf of a child in the custody of the local board or in the custody of a licensed child-placing agency and placed for adoption, pursuant to this chapter, if it is determined that:

1. The child is a child with special needs; and
2. The adoptive parents are capable of providing the permanent family relationships needed by the child in all respects except financial.

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59 Such subsidy payments shall be made, however, only after a reasonable but unsuccessful effort has
 60 been made to place the child with appropriate adoptive parents without the provision of adoption
 61 assistance pursuant to this chapter except in cases where the child has developed significant emotional
 62 ties with the prospective adoptive parents while in the care of such parents as a foster child.

63 *D. Nonrecurring expense payments may be made to the adoptive parents for expenses related to the*
 64 *adoption including reasonable and necessary adoption fees, court costs, attorney fees and other legal*
 65 *service fees, as well as any other expenses that are directly related to the legal adoption of a child with*
 66 *special needs including costs related to the adoption study, any health and psychological examinations,*
 67 *supervision of the placement prior to adoption and any transportation costs and reasonable costs of*
 68 *lodging and food for the child and the adoptive parents when necessary to complete the placement or*
 69 *adoption process for which the adoptive parents carry ultimate liability for payment and that have not*
 70 *been reimbursed from any other source, as set forth in 45 C.F.R. § 1356.41. However, the total amount*
 71 *of nonrecurring expense payments made to adoptive parents for the adoption of a child shall not exceed*
 72 *\$2,000 or an amount established by federal law.*

73 § 63.2-1302. Adoption assistance payments; maintenance; special needs; payment agreements;
 74 continuation of payments when adoptive parents move to another jurisdiction; procedural requirements.

75 A. ~~Subsidy~~ Adoption assistance payments ~~shall~~ may include:

76 1. A Title IV-E or state-funded maintenance ~~subsidy~~ payments that shall be payable monthly to
 77 provide for the support and care of the child; however, ~~the Title IV-E or state-funded maintenance~~
 78 ~~subsidy~~ payments shall not exceed the ~~maximum regular~~ foster care payment that would otherwise be
 79 made for the child; and

80 2. A ~~Statespecial need~~ ~~subsidy~~ ~~services~~ payments to provide special services to the child that the
 81 adoptive parents cannot afford and that are not covered by insurance or otherwise, including, but not
 82 limited to:

83 a. Medical, surgical and dental care;

84 b. Hospitalization;

85 ~~c. Legal services in effecting adoption;~~

86 ~~d.c.~~ Individual remedial educational services;

87 ~~e.d.~~ Psychological and psychiatric treatment;

88 ~~f.e.~~ Speech and physical therapy; and

89 ~~g.f.~~ Special services, equipment, treatment and training for physical and mental handicaps; and

90 ~~h. Cost of adoptive home study and placement by a child-placing agency other than the local board.~~

91 ~~Special need subsidies~~ State special services payments may be paid to the vendor of the goods or
 92 services directly or through to the adoptive parents.

93 B. ~~Subsidy~~ Adoption assistance payments shall cease when the child with special needs reaches the
 94 age of ~~eighteen~~ 18 years. If it is determined that the child has a mental or physical handicap, or an
 95 educational delay resulting from such handicap, warranting the continuation of assistance, ~~subsidy~~
 96 adoption assistance payments may be made until the child reaches the age of ~~twenty-one~~ 21 years.

97 B. C. ~~Maintenance~~ ~~subsidy~~ payments and special need ~~subsidy~~ Adoption assistance payments shall be
 98 made on the basis of an adoption assistance agreement entered into by the local board and the adoptive
 99 parents or, in cases in which the child is in the custody of a licensed child-placing agency, an agreement
 100 between the local board, the licensed child-placing agency and the adoptive parents.

101 Prior to entering into an adoption assistance agreement, the local board or licensed child-placing
 102 agency shall ensure that adoptive parents have received information about their child's eligibility for
 103 ~~subsidy~~ adoption assistance; about their child's special needs and, to the extent possible, the current and
 104 potential impact of those special needs. The local board or licensed child-placing agency shall also
 105 ensure that adoptive parents receive information about the process for appeal in the event of a
 106 disagreement between the adoptive parent and the local board or the adoptive parent and the
 107 child-placing agency and information about the procedures for revising the adoption assistance
 108 agreement.

109 Adoptive parents shall submit annually to the local board within thirty days of the anniversary date
 110 of the approved agreement an affidavit which certifies that (i) the child on whose behalf they are
 111 receiving ~~subsidy~~ adoption assistance payments remains in their care, (ii) the child's condition requiring
 112 ~~subsidy~~ adoption assistance continues to exist, and (iii) whether or not changes to the adoption
 113 assistance agreement are requested. Failure to provide this information may be grounds for suspension of
 114 the subsidy payment until such time as the information is provided.

115 Maintenance ~~subsidy~~ Title IV-E and state-funded maintenance payments made pursuant to this section
 116 shall not be reduced unless the circumstances of the child or adoptive parents have changed significantly
 117 in relation to the terms of the subsidy agreement be changed only in accordance with the provisions of
 118 § 473 of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. § 673).

119 C.D. Responsibility for ~~subsidy~~ adoption assistance payments for a child placed for adoption shall be
 120 continued by the local board that initiated the agreement in the event that the adoptive parents live in or

121 move to another jurisdiction; provided that the adoptive parents meet the conditions of the agreement
122 and provided that an agreement can be made with the appropriate agency of the locality within or
123 without the Commonwealth where the adoptive family lives or is moving to provide the necessary
124 assistance in administering the subsidy agreement.

125 *D.E.* Payments may be made under this chapter from appropriations for foster care services for the
126 maintenance and medical or other services for children who have special needs in accordance with
127 § 63.2-1301. Within the limitations of the appropriations to the Department, the Commissioner shall
128 reimburse any agency making payments under this chapter. Any such agency may seek and accept funds
129 from other sources, including federal, state, local, and private sources, to carry out the purposes of this
130 chapter.

131 § 63.2-1303. Qualification for adoption assistance payments.

132 Qualification for ~~subsidy~~ *adoption assistance* payments shall be determined by the local board ~~or by~~
133 ~~the licensed child-placing agency, whichever has custody of the child, in response to an application for~~
134 *adoption assistance submitted* in accordance with regulations adopted by the Board.