

Ensure Foster Children Have A Bright Future
An Act to Promote Youth Advocacy

Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
Sponsored by Representative Stephen LeDuc
House Bill 121 (as of 4/3/07)

Proposal:

Require all children 12 and over, to attend all court proceedings concerning custodial, visitation, permanency planning and all other legal matters to help ensure their voice is heard and to receive on-going information regarding their permanency plan and service delivery where the child must be present unless waived by a judge.

Why the legislation is necessary:

- To ensure the Child is informed of any changes regarding their situation
- To provide further opportunity for the Child to express their own viewpoints

Impact:

- It affects the child who is the most invested in their own future then any other person.
- It will impact the way the Courts and DSS surrounding the child in the way they coordinate their service delivery.

Financial Impact:

The cost would be minimal because the social workers, foster parents and lawyers are already being paid for their services and should be able to provide transportation to such proceedings/meetings as well as keep the Child abreast of updated information.

Who would implement it:

Legal custodian – DSS is responsible for ensuring the child is able to physically attend. Court is responsible for ensuring the child's attorney is required to know and report first hand whether the Child wants to and is able to participate in the proceedings.

How it would be implemented:

Collaboration between DSS and Courts to ensure the child is able to be present.

Please Contact:

Bob Fitzpatrick in Representative Stephen LeDuc's office at 617-722-2915; or Eliza Wagner, Speak Out Team, at ewagner@csrox.org or 617-989-9447 for questions regarding *An Act to Promote Youth Advocacy*.