

Michigan House eases adoptions, sets time limit

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LANSING — State legislators voted Tuesday to speed up adoptions in Michigan, moving to set a deadline for some parents who have second thoughts about voluntarily putting up children for adoption and shortening supervision of families with adopted infants.

One measure in a seven-bill package approved by the House and sent to the Senate would address adoptions in which birth parents choose their child's adoptive parents.

Birth parents could consent to an adoption starting 24 hours after the child's birth, in the presence of an adoption attorney or social worker from a placing agency. They would have no more than five business days to revoke their "out-of-court" consent, and a judge would decide what's in the child's best interests.

No time limit exists under current law, according to supporters.

Backers said the goal is to streamline adoptions in a fair way for everyone involved.

"To break down some of the barriers, to relieve some of the burdens ... this streamlines it and really makes people participants all the way around to see the children get into the home," said Rep. Kenneth Kurtz, a Coldwater Republican and sponsor of one bill.

Other bills would shorten the supervisory period for families adopting an infant from six months to three months — allowing adoptions to be finalized more quickly — create a registry for men who believe they may have fathered a child to be notified of any future adoption process and specify what sort of documentation counts as evidence of fatherhood.

The bills were passed by a range of 103-6 to 96-13 in the GOP-led chamber.

Rep. Pam Clio, a Clio Democrat, said she voted against some of the legislation because she heard from a local probate judge who said it would add another layer of bureaucracy. She also said she is concerned that it could let mothers off the hook on testifying who the child's biological father is.

Tom Hickson, the Michigan Catholic Conference's vice president for public policy and advocacy, said the legislation is a "win-win" for all parties.

"By shortening both the consent duration and the supervisory requirements, this legislation will help to develop a greater sense of permanency. The putative father component of the package is also helpful to ensure the child's father's rights are respected through the process," he said.