



**THE FLORIDA SENATE**  
**SENATOR BEN ALBRITTON**  
*President*

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**Senate Passes Key Child Welfare Legislation**

*Recruit case managers, professional foster care pilot program, combat child sex trafficking*

**Tallahassee**—The Florida Senate today passed Senate Bill (SB) 7012, Child Welfare, by Senator Erin Grall (R-Vero Beach), who serves as chair of the Senate Committee on Children, Families and Elder Affairs. The bill expands data collection to combat child exploitation, creates a recruitment program for child welfare professionals, and establishes a professional foster care pilot program to better serve children with high behavioral acuity.

“Data is clear that the faster we can get traumatized children into loving, permanent homes, the better off those children will be in the long run. As hard as we try, government can never replace the role of family. But, we’re dedicated to working hard to be part of the solution,” said Senate President Ben Albritton (R-Wauchula). “We know vicious and immoral criminals are out there each and every day in search of new ways to evade our laws and exploit vulnerable children. The more data we have on when and how this evil is happening, the better chance we have to stay one step ahead of these predators and keep vulnerable children safe. Children are our future, and we are fighting together for their safety.”

“We know children can struggle in group homes and more so in institutionalized settings, but benefit, and even thrive, when placed with a family. Florida needs more family-like foster placements for children with high behavioral needs. The professional foster care pilot program will help us identify specifically trained foster families willing to care for a child with unique needs,” said Senator Grall. “Additionally, this bill provides tremendous opportunities for retirees to stay involved in their communities through the Child Welfare System. This legislation will help Florida recruit retired law enforcement officers, emergency first responders, military servicemembers, teachers, health care practitioners, and others who have specific training and skills honed over their careers in other fields that will benefit vulnerable children in state care.”

**Expands Data Collection to Combat Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children**

The bill requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to collect and provide specific data for children assessed for placement in safe houses and safe foster homes for better data analysis that can be used to stop the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

**Creates a Child Welfare Workforce Recruitment Program**

The bill requires the DCF to develop and implement a child protective investigator and case manager recruitment program to recruit individuals who have previously held public safety and service positions. For example, individuals such as retired law enforcement officers, emergency first responders, military servicemembers, teachers, healthcare practitioners, and emergency management professionals that have a continued desire to serve their community are the intended recruitment population.

DCF would collaborate with Community-Based Care lead agencies to distribute information about employment opportunities; develop an employee referral system for case managers; and collect and update quarterly outcome data of the program.

Additionally, DCF would convene a case management workforce workgroup to analyze current case management practices and any gaps to develop clear and actionable recommendations for improving case management. The workgroup would convene by July 1, 2025, and operate through December 1, 2025, and submit a report summarizing its findings with actionable policy recommendations by December 1, 2025. The bill appropriates \$300,000 (\$100,000 recurring and \$200,000 nonrecurring) to DCF to develop and implement the Child Protective Investigator and Case Manager Recruitment Program.

**Establishes a Professional Foster Care Pilot Program**

The bill requires the DCF to create a 4-year pilot program to place children with high behavioral acuity and potential frequent placement disruption in the least restrictive, family-like setting possible, with specifically trained foster care families that receive enhanced compensation to be the sole caregiver and a coordinator of services for those children.

The bill requires an independent evaluation of the pilot to determine cost-effectiveness and outcomes, and a final report including the findings of the independent evaluation and the feasibility of expanding the pilot program statewide.

SB 7012 appropriates \$3 million to the DCF to develop and implement the Professional Foster Care Pilot Program.

For more information, please visit [www.FLSenate.gov](http://www.FLSenate.gov).

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