



THE FLORIDA SENATE
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President

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Key Child Welfare Legislation Signed Into Law

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

Tallahassee—Senate Bill (SB) 7012, Child Welfare, by Senator Erin Grall (R-Vero Beach), Chair of the Senate Committee on Children, Families and Elder Affairs, was signed into law yesterday by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. 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 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 creates additional requirements for the collection and maintenance of data on the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and requires a study of residential bed capacity and a gap analysis of non-residential services for victims of CSEC.

Creates a Child Welfare Workforce Recruitment Program

The bill requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to create a Child Protective Investigator (CPI) and case manager recruitment program for individuals who have previously held public safety and service positions and have a continued desire to serve their communities. The bill also requires the DCF to collaborate with community-based care (CBC) lead agencies to create a referral system for case manager applicants and to convene a case management workforce workgroup composed of child welfare professionals to address current policy gaps and develop actionable recommendations to improve case management.

Establishes a Professional Foster Care Pilot Program

The bill requires the DCF to create a pilot program for treatment foster care, or a substantially similar evidence-based program of professional foster care. This pilot program is intended to introduce a short-term, family-like placement option for children in foster care that have high resource indicators or children that are stepping down from a placement in an inpatient residential treatment. The bill requires specialized training requirements for foster parents and a 24-hour service to provide crisis intervention and placement stabilization services if needed.

For more information, please visit www.FLSenate.gov.

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