HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: CS/CS/HB 363 Temporary Care of a Child SPONSOR(S): Health & Human Services Committee; Civil Justice & Claims Subcommittee; White; Williams and others TIED BILLS: None IDEN./SIM. BILLS: SB 200

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Children, Families & Seniors Subcommittee	14 Y, 0 N	Tuszynski	Brazzell
2) Civil Justice & Claims Subcommittee	9 Y, 4 N, As CS	Stranburg	Bond
3) Health & Human Services Committee	16 Y, 1 N, As CS	Tuszynski	Calamas

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Families are often confronted with circumstances, such as drug abuse, illness, unemployment, or homelessness, which, if not appropriately addressed, can lead to abuse, neglect, or abandonment of their children. Safe Families for Children works to support such families in crisis in three areas of Florida: Naples, Orlando, and Tampa Bay. The organization assists parents with finding safe temporary placements to ensure their children do not enter the child welfare system while parents work to reestablish a safe and stable living environment.

The bill creates s. 409.1761, F.S., which authorizes organizations to provide assistance to families in crisis by finding volunteer respite families to care for children not in the child welfare system.

The bill authorizes the parent of a minor child to execute a contract for care to delegate certain powers regarding the care and custody of the child to a volunteer respite family that is screened and trained by certain nonprofit organizations. The delegation does not change parental rights, obligations, or authority regarding custody, visitation, or support unless determined by a court to be in the best interests of the child. The bill includes various requirements to ensure child safety. It:

- Prohibits a parent or agent from receiving compensation related to the delegation of care and custody;
- Limits the contract for care to a period of 6 months with an option for an extension of one 6-month • period:
- Requires that either both parents sign the contract for care or notice be provided to a noncustodial • parent:
- Specifies requirements for the execution, form, and revocation of the contract for care;
- Requires nonprofit organizations that assist with the temporary placement of a child with a volunteer respite family to conduct background screenings, provide support services and training to the families, maintain certain records, and register with the Department of Children and Families (DCF); and
- Authorizes DCF to provide information regarding temporary care programs to parents during a child protective investigation, if appropriate.

The bill also exempts the nonprofit organization assisting with the placement and the volunteer respite family from licensure and regulation by DCF. However, the bill does not prevent DCF or law enforcement from investigating allegations of abandonment, abuse, neglect, unlawful desertion of a child, or human trafficking.

The bill does not have a fiscal impact on state or local government.

The bill has an effective date of July 1, 2017.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Child Welfare System

Families are often confronted with circumstances, such as drug abuse, illness, domestic violence, unemployment, mental health issues, or homelessness, which, if not appropriately addressed, can lead to abuse, neglect, or abandonment of their children.¹ Parents in crisis may be unable to simultaneously deal with both the crisis and parenting due to the lack of family or supportive relationships.² This type of social isolation combined with the stress of a crisis can increase the likelihood of child abuse, often through child neglect as a parent must choose between addressing the immediate crisis and adequately caring for his or her child.³

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) and contracted community-based lead agencies administer the Florida child welfare system under ch. 39, F.S. The child welfare system identifies families whose children are in danger of suffering or have suffered abuse, abandonment, or neglect and works with those families to address the problems that are endangering children, if possible. If the problems cannot be ameliorated, the child welfare system finds safe out-of-home placements for children, such as relative and non-relative caregivers, foster families, or adoptive families.⁴ As of December 31, 2016, there were 25,534 children under the supervision of DCF in out-of-home care.⁵ Generally, out-of-home placements have been increasing for the past few years:⁶



Florida Child Welfare System Out-of-Home Placement: September 2014 - December 2016

¹ Murray, K, et al., *Safe Families for Children's Program Model and Logic Model Description Report,* unpublished presentation, University of Maryland School of Social Work (2012) (on file with Children, Families, & Seniors Subcommittee). ² *Id.* at pg. 4.

⁶ Department of Children and Families, DCF Quick Facts, available at <u>http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/general-information/quick-facts/</u> (last visited March 23, 2017). **STORAGE NAME**: h0363e.HHS **PAGE: 2**

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³ *Id*. at pg. 2.

⁴ See s. 39.001(1), F.S.

⁵ "Out-of-home care" includes both children in board-paid foster care and those receiving protective supervision in the home of a relative or approved non-relative after a removal. Children under protective supervision in the home of a relative or approved non-relative after removal are considered "out-of-home," as they are entitled to the same safeguards as board-paid foster children. See Florida Department of Children and Families, DCF Quick Facts, 2016-17 Quarter 2 Program Data, <u>http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/general-information/quick-facts/cw/</u> (last visited March 23, 2017).

Prevention

DCF's child welfare program works in partnership with local communities and the courts to ensure the safety, timely permanency, and well-being of children.

Child welfare services seek to prevent child abandonment, abuse, and neglect.⁷ DCF's practice model is based on the safety of the child within his or her home, prioritizing the use of in-home services such as parenting coaching and counseling to maintain and strengthen that child's natural supports in his or her home environment. DCF provides these child welfare and related services throughout the state by contracting with lead agencies, also known as community-based-care organizations (CBCs).⁸

DCF offers preventive services⁹ to families to avoid removal of children from their homes, ¹⁰ called Family Support Services (FSS). FSS are used when an investigator has determined that children in the family are safe but have a high or very high risk level and potential of removal. These services are designed to reduce risk and prevent removal by:¹¹

- Strengthening protective factors in the family;
- Enhancing the social and emotional well-being of each child and family;
- Enabling families to use other resources and opportunities in the community; and
- Assisting families with creating and strengthening family resource networks.

The rate of FSS services provided varies by CBC. As of December 2016, the variation ranged from a low as 0.2 children per 1,000 (11^{th} , 16^{th} , and 13^{th} circuits) to a high of 5.7 children per 1,000 (18^{th} Circuit).¹²



Children Receiving Services by Type – Rates per 1,000 Child Population¹³

⁷ S. 39.001(8), F.S.

⁸ Community-Based Care, The Department of Children and Families, accessible at <u>http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/community-based-care</u> (last accessed March 23, 2017).

⁹ S. 39.01(60), F.S., "Preventive services" means social services and other supportive and rehabilitative services provided to the parent or legal custodian of the child and to the child for the purpose of averting the removal of the child from the home or disruption of a family which will or could result in the placement of a child in foster care.

⁰ S. 39.401(7), F.S.

¹¹ Department of Children and Families, Operating Procedures, CFOP 170-1, Family Support Services, May 30, 2016, available at <u>http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/admin/publications/policies.asp?path=CFOP%20170-xx%20Child%20Welfare</u> (last accessed March 23, 2017).

¹² Department of Children and Families, Child Welfare Key Indicators Monthly Report, pg. 24, January 2017, available at http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/qa/cwkeyindicator/KI Monthly Report January 2017 Final.pdf (last accessed March 18, 2017).

However, when a child cannot safely remain at home, DCF works to keep the child safe out of home while providing services to reunify the child and family as soon as it is safe to do so.

Ultimately, if a child's home remains unsafe and the court is unable to reunify the child with his or her family, the child welfare system works to find an adoptive family for the child.

Types of Placements and Licensure

For children who cannot safely remain in their own homes, the child welfare system finds an appropriate out-of-home placement. The placements range from temporary placement with a family member to a permanent adoptive placement with a family previously unknown to the child. Family foster homes,¹⁴ residential child-caring agencies, and child-placing agencies¹⁵ must be licensed by DCF.¹⁶ However, the following placements do not require licensure by DCF:

- Relative caregivers, such as a grandmother or aunt;
- Non-relative caregivers, such as a neighbor or family friend; •
- An adoptive home which has been approved by DCF or by a licensed child-placing agency for • children placed for adoption; and
- Persons or neighbors who care for children in their homes for less than 90 days.¹⁷

Licensed entities must comply with DCF rules pertaining to:

- Operation, conduct, and maintenance of these homes;
- Provision of food, clothing, educational opportunities, services, equipment, and individual supplies to assure the healthy physical, emotional, and mental development of the children served:
- Appropriateness, safety, cleanliness, and general adequacy of the premises, including fire prevention and health standards, to provide for the physical comfort, care, and well-being of the children served;
- Ratio of staff to children required to provide adequate care and supervision of the children served; and
- In the case of foster homes, the maximum number of children in the home and good moral character of personnel based upon screening, education, training, and experience requirements.¹⁸

Background Screening

Level 2 background screening¹⁹ is required for child welfare system personnel,²⁰ including all owners, operators, employees, and volunteers working in a child-placing agency, family foster home, or residential child-caring agency.²¹ Family members and persons between the ages of 12 and 18 residing with the owner or operator of a family foster home or agency must also undergo a delinquency record check, but such record check does not require fingerprinting.²²

¹⁴ S. 409.175(2)(e), F.S., defines a "family foster home" as a private residence in which children who are unattended by a parent or legal guardian are provided 24-hour care. Such homes include emergency shelter family homes and specialized foster homes for children with special needs. A family foster home does not include a person who cares for a child of a friend for a period not to exceed 90 days, a relative who cares for a child and does not receive reimbursement for such care from the state or federal government, or an adoptive home which has been approved by the department or by a licensed child-placing agency for children placed for adoption. S.409.175(2)(d), F.S., defines a "child-placing agency" as any person, corporation or agency, public or private that receives a child for

placement and places or arranges for the placement of a child in a family foster home, residential child-caring agency, or adoptive home.

¹⁶ S. 409.175, F.S. ¹⁷ Id.

¹⁸ Id.

¹⁹ S. 409.175(2)(k), F.S.

²⁰ S. 409.175(6)(a), F.S.

²¹ S. 409.175(2)(i), F.S. ²² Id.

A level 2 background screening involves a state and national fingerprint-based criminal record check through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).²³ Level 2 background screenings require that a person has not been arrested for and awaits final disposition, has not been found guilty of, or entered a plea of nolo contendere to crimes related to sexual misconduct, child or adult abuse, murder, manslaughter, battery, assault, kidnapping, weapons, arson, burglary, theft, robbery, or exploitation.²⁴ DCF processes the background screenings through the Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse for individuals working in the child welfare system, who are required by law to be background screened.

Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse

The Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse²⁵ (clearinghouse) is a statewide system that enables specified state agencies, such as DCF and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, to submit requests for level 2 background screenings for statutorily defined purposes, such as licensure or license-related employment. The level 2 screening results are provided to the requesting agency, not the individual or employer organization, and are also retained in the clearinghouse.

There are several benefits to utilizing the clearinghouse, including significant cost savings due to use of existing screenings, access to a screened individual's Florida public criminal record, and immediate notification of an employee or licensee arrest in Florida due to the active monitoring of the record.

Safe Families Model

In 2002, the Safe Families for Children (SFFC) program originated in Chicago as a ministry of the LYDIA Home Association, a Christian social service organization. The program created a model in which parents in crisis without family or support relationships had a place to go for help without entering the child welfare system and losing custody of their children.²⁶ The model includes placing a child with an unpaid volunteer host family, allowing a parent the time and space to deal with whatever issues brought them to SFFC, such as hospitalization, or a longer-term crisis, such as drug treatment or incarceration. By temporarily placing the child with a host family, SFFC hopes to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect, as well as provide a safe place for a child.²⁷ One of the main tenets of this model is the creation of networks and relationships to help care for the child and stabilize the family.²⁸

These private, voluntary placements require that the parent sign an agreement with terms and conditions of the arrangement, including what the parent will need to do to be reunified with their children and how the program will respond if the parent is unable to complete performance.²⁹ The parent thereafter delegates care and custody of the child to the host volunteer family.

According to SFFC, parents retain full legal custody of children, volunteer families are screened and supported, and there is an average length of stay of 6 weeks.³⁰ Volunteers and families served often continue a relationship after reunification has occurred, reducing social isolation and providing ongoing support.³¹

²³ s. 435.04, F.S.

²⁴ s. 435.04(2), F.S.

²⁵ s. 435.12, F.S.

²⁶₂₇ Supra note 1, pg. 3.

²⁷ Id.

²⁸ Supra note 1, pg. 5.

²⁹ The Florida Senate, Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs, *Issue Brief 2010-304: "Temporary Parents" as an Alternative to the Foster Care System (September 2009)*, at 2, *available at*

http://archive.flsenate.gov/data/Publications/2010/Senate/reports/interim_reports/pdf/2010-304cf.pdf (last accessed March 23, 2017). ³⁰ Safe Families for Children, How Safe Families Works, *available at*: <u>http://safe-families.org/about/how-safe-families-works/</u> (last accessed March 23, 2017). ³¹ Id

Programs based on the SFFC model are active in 70 cities in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.,³² with 9 U.S. states codifying similar models in statute.³³ SFFC models operate in three Florida areas: Naples, Orlando, and Tampa Bay.³⁴

Safe Families in Illinois, in conjunction with the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services, is currently being evaluated in a randomized control evaluation by the University of North Carolina School of Social Work. Safe Families in the United Kingdom is being evaluated³⁵ by the Dartington Social Research Unit.³⁶ The U.S. Department of Health and Human Service Child Welfare Information Gateway only lists one 2014 article describing, but not evaluating, the SFFC model, ³⁷ and SFFC is not currently listed with the California Evidence Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare.³⁸

Liability and Insurance

Should a child become ill or injured while in the care of a SFFC volunteer host family, the host family may have limited personal liability pursuant to the federal Volunteer Protection Act³⁹ (VPA) and Florida Volunteer Protection Act⁴⁰ (FVPA). The VPA provides that a volunteer of a nonprofit organization is not liable for harm caused by his or her act or omission if:

- The volunteer was acting within the scope of his or her responsibilities for the organization; and
- The harm was not caused by willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed by the volunteer.⁴¹

The FVPA also provides immunity from civil liability if the volunteer was acting with good faith within the scope of his or her duties, as an ordinary reasonable person would have acted under the same or similar circumstances, and the harm was not caused by wanton or willful misconduct.⁴² Neither the VPA nor the FVPA provide immunity to the nonprofit organization itself.

Effect of Proposed Changes

HB 363 creates s. 409.1761, F.S., to expressly allow the SFFC model to be used in Florida and provide parameters for its use. The bill states that the purpose of the statute is to prevent the entry of a child at risk of abuse or neglect into the child welfare system.

The bill establishes requirements for a "qualified nonprofit organization," defined as a Florida private nonprofit organization that assists parents by providing temporary respite care for children by volunteer respite families under a contract for care. The nonprofit organization must:

- Comply with the best practice standards of a "qualified association," which means an association that publishes and requires compliance with standards for operating a program that assists parents in providing temporary respite care for a child by a volunteer respite family.
- Identify appropriate and safe placements for children based on the results of the background screenings and home visits.

³² Safe Families for Children, About Us, available at <u>http://safe-families.org/about/</u> (last accessed March 23, 2017).

 ³³ Indiana (Burns Ind. Code Ann. § 29-3-9-1); Kansas (K.S.A. § 38-2403); Kentucky (KRS § 403.352); Maine (18-A M.R.S. § 5-104);
 Mississippi (Miss. Code Ann. § 93-31-3); Oklahoma (10 Okl. St. § 700); Oregon (ORS § 109.056); West Virginia (W. Va. Code § 49-8-3); and Wisconsin (Wis. Stat. § 48.979).
 ³⁴ Seta Familia for Children (M. Va. Code (M. Va. Code

³⁴ Safe Families for Children, Locations, available at http://safe-families.org/about/locations/ (last visited March 23, 2017).

³⁵ https://www.dartington.org.uk/projects/view/9

 ³⁶ Safe Families for Children, About Us, Impact, available at <u>http://safe-families.org/about/impact/</u> (last accessed March 23, 2017).
 ³⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Information Gateway, Library,

https://library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/library/ (last accessed March 23, 2017).

³⁸ California Evidence Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare, <u>http://www.cebc4cw.org/</u> (last accessed March 23, 2017).

³⁹ Volunteer Protection Act of 1997, 42 U.S.C. § 14501 et seq.

⁴⁰ s. 768.1355, F.S.

⁴¹ 42 U.S.C. § 14503.

- Train volunteer families that will serve as volunteer respite families under a contract for care.
- Provide ongoing services and resources to support the minor child, parents, and volunteer respite families.

In addition, the organization must ensure that Level 2 background screenings are conducted on the employees and volunteers of the organization as well as members of the volunteer respite families who are 18 years of age or older. All members of the volunteer family household between 12 and 18 years of age are not required to be fingerprinted but must be screened for delinquency records. DCF must inform the organization if such screened persons are eligible to volunteer with children pursuant to s. 409.175, F.S., and ch. 435, F.S.

A qualified nonprofit organization must maintain records on each volunteer respite family and child served. These records must include:

- The name and age of the child;
- The name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and other contact information for the child's volunteer respite family;
- A copy of the contract for respite care executed pursuant to the act; and
- Proof of the volunteer respite family's compliance with the personnel screening requirements of the act.

The organization must also provide an annual report to DCF including:

- The name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and other contact information of the organization;
- The name of the organization's director;
- The names and addresses of the officers and members of the governing body of the organization;
- The total number of approved volunteer respite families currently working with the organization and the total number of children served the previous fiscal year; and
- A copy of its agreement or certification with a qualified association for the purpose of providing volunteer respite services pursuant to the act.

The bill requires the organization to provide the qualified association with data to show that the organization is in substantial compliance with the standards set by the qualified association, immediately notify DCF of any suspected or confirmed incident of abuse, neglect, or other maltreatment of a child while in the care of one of the organization's respite families and make available to DCF at any time all records relating to the program and children cared for by the organization's volunteer respite families to ensure compliance with the provisions of statute.

Contract for Care

The bill authorizes a parent of a minor child to delegate the care of the child to a volunteer respite family by executing a contract for care. The bill prohibits the parent and the agent from receiving any compensation related to the delegation of care and custody.

The contract for care may not exceed a period of 6 months with an option for an extension for one 6month period, and may not delegate the power to consent to marriage or adoption of the child, the performance or inducement of an abortion on or for the child, or the termination of parental rights of the child.

 ⁴³ S. 409.175, F.S., outlines the licensure requirements DCF must apply to family foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child placing agencies including level 2 background screening under ch. 435, F.S. Chapter 435, F.S., details the requirements of background screening in Florida including level 2 screening which involves State and Federal level criminal background checks with 52 specific offenses that are disqualifying for employment by DCF or other agency that requires level 2 screening..
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The contract for care must be signed by both parents, if both parents are living and have shared custody of the child. If the parents do not have shared custody, the parent with sole custody may execute the contract but must notify the noncustodial parent at the last known address within 5 days. Notification is not required to a parent whose parental rights have been terminated. The contract for care must also be signed by all household members of the volunteer respite family 18 years of age and older and by a representative of the nonprofit organization attesting that the volunteer respite family has successfully completed the required training and background screening. Finally, two subscribing witnesses must sign the contract for care.

The bill details the requirements of a contract for care to include sixteen distinct pieces of information relating to the identity of the child and parent(s), the identity of the volunteer respite family, delegated and non-delegated powers, expiration date, and the health, education, normalcy, and discipline of the child.

Any parent with custodial rights may revoke the contract for care prior to its expiration, and the volunteer respite family must return the child to the custody of the revoking parent as soon as reasonably possible.

The bill further specifies that the execution of a contract for care does not deprive a parent of parental rights, obligations, or authority regarding custody, visitation, or support.

Child Welfare Investigations

The bill permits DCF, during a child protective investigation that does not result in an out-of-home placement, to provide information to a parent regarding temporary respite care services by a qualified nonprofit organization. This aligns with the statutory requirement that DCF provide information on family support resources and prevention services in the community.

The execution of a contract for care authorized by the bill after using such community services may not be construed as abandonment, abuse, or neglect without other evidence or except as otherwise provided by law. However, the bill does not prevent DCF or law enforcement from investigating allegations of abuse, abandonment, neglect, unlawful desertion of a child, or human trafficking.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

- **Section 1:** Creates s. 409.1761, F.S., relating to organizations providing respite care for children not in the child welfare system.
- **Section 2:** Provides an effective date of July 1, 2017.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

- B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:
 - 1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

A custodial parent that is required to provide notice to a noncustodial parent of the delegation of care and custody may incur approximately \$6.74 in postage costs. The bill requires a qualified nonprofit organization to complete a criminal history record check on certain individuals at \$44 per individual.⁴⁴ Also, additional fees may be charged by each live scan⁴⁵ provider for their services.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

- A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:
 - 1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not Applicable. The bill does not appear to have an effect local or county government.

2. Other:

It is well settled that the interest of parents in the care, custody, and control of their children is perhaps the oldest of the recognized fundamental liberty interests protected by the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.⁴⁶ The United States Supreme Court has explained the fundamental nature of this right is rooted in history and tradition:

The history and culture of Western civilization reflect a strong tradition of parental concern for the nurture and upbringing of their children. This primary role of the

⁴⁴ The cost breakdown is \$20 for the state and national criminal history checks and \$24 for 5 year fingerprint retention in the Care Provider Screening Clearinghouse.

⁴⁵ Live Scan is an inkless electronic fingerprinting technology, allowing the electronic recording, storage, and transmission of ingerprints.

parents in the upbringing of their children is now established beyond debate as an enduring American tradition.⁴⁷

These constitutional protections extend to the parenting interests of custodial and non-custodial parents alike.⁴⁸ The bill gives parents an additional method for exercising this fundamental liberty interest, in the context of family crisis. To the extent that the bill authorizes delegation of the care and custody of a minor child to a volunteer respite family through a contract for care without the consent of both parents, such delegation may be challenged by a nonconsenting parent.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

The bill does not create rulemaking authority or a need for rulemaking.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

On March 8, 2017, the Civil Justice & Claims Subcommittee adopted one amendment and reported the bill favorably as a committee substitute. The amendment:

- Defined the term "qualified association," which publishes and requires compliance with minimum best practices standards for operating a program that assists parents in providing temporary respite care for a child by a volunteer respite family; and
- Revised the duties of a qualified nonprofit organization, requiring the organization to establish its
 program under a qualified association, provide background screening for employees and volunteer
 respite family members, provide training to the volunteer respite families, maintain and provide
 various records to the qualified association and the DCF.

This analysis is drafted to the committee substitute as passed by the Civil Justice & Claims Subcommittee.

On March 23, 2017, the Health and Human Services Committee adopted one amendment and reported the bill favorably as a committee substitute. The amendment:

- Allows a contract for care to be extended for one 6-month period;
- Removes the requirement for a contract for care to be notarized; and
- Makes technical changes to the language and structure for clarity and conciseness.

This analysis is drafted to the committee substitute as passed by the Health and Human Services Committee.