

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 205

BY SENATORS MIZELL, BARROW, CLOUD, HEWITT, JACKSON AND FRED
MILLS

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Senate Select Committee on Women and Children to conduct ongoing research to ascertain the efficacy of the current programs available and funds allocated in meeting the needs of children of the state and to make recommendations for changes that will improve outcomes, minimize duplication of services, and fill any gaps in services necessary to promote child well-being.

WHEREAS, there are over one million children in the state of Louisiana who are the state's greatest asset and whose well-being is critical to the state's future; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana ranks 48th overall among states in child well-being, 46th in child mortality, and 49th in infant mortality; and

WHEREAS, almost thirty percent of Louisiana's children live in poverty, twenty percent live in high-poverty areas of the state, and these numbers have risen during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, growing up in poverty is one of the greatest threats to healthy child development, which impacts the entire trajectory of a child's life; and

WHEREAS, many children in our state do not have a safe home environment including hundreds of children who are victims of sex trafficking every year; and

WHEREAS, the children of Louisiana are in need of a variety of services including physical and mental health care services, meal assistance, tutorial programs, educational services, mentorship, scholarships, social development programs, community development, and housing assistance; and

WHEREAS, billions of dollars in state and federal funds are expended annually on programs for children in this state; and

WHEREAS, numerous state departments of Louisiana provide a variety of services to the states' children using several of funding sources; and

WHEREAS, the legislature also appropriates monies to a myriad of nongovernmental programs as a mechanism to provide additional services to children; and

WHEREAS, there is not currently a system in place to measure the outcomes of the various programs and services; and

WHEREAS, the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana recognizes its fiduciary responsibility to the citizens of the state, particularly the state's youngest citizens, to make the best use of our limited financial resources; and

WHEREAS, by investing wisely in our children, we can have a significant impact on the trajectory of our citizens' lives and have lifelong impacts in every dimension of their life, from physical and mental health to educational attainment and labor market success.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate Select Committee on Women and Children meet regularly and conduct research on:

(1) Access to children's basic needs such as clean water, nutritious food, safe shelter, healthcare, and education.

(2) Access to resources that promote healthy development and promote the well-being of all the state's children regardless of socioeconomic status.

(3) Access to children's services through every region of the state including the variations of access between the urban and rural areas of the state.

(4) The value of the development of a regional approach to the provision of services that promote child well-being.

(5) Current policies and programs intended to reduce child poverty and improve child well-being outcomes.

(6) Best practices in other states and countries.

(7) Roadblocks that hinder improvement of child well-being in the state.

(8) The value of the development of a holistic approach to the provision of services to children to improve outcomes, minimize duplication of services, and fill any gaps in services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee establish the scope of the study, necessary areas of expertise and consultation not available through state resources, and identify the potential cost to conduct the committee's work and deliberations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee obtain input from the National Conference on State Legislatures, the Southern Legislative Conference, the Children's Cabinet, all state agencies that are included in the Children's Budget, nongovernmental organizations including faith-based organizations that receive governmental funding to provide services to children, and any other entity, person, or organization that will assist the committee in its research.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate, the legislative fiscal office, and the legislative auditor shall provide staff support to the committee in its research.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee shall provide an initial report to the legislature on or before March 1, 2023 and that the report shall include, at a minimum, next steps to study.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE