

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 159

BY SENATOR CLOUD

A RESOLUTION

To create and provide for the Child Permanency Task Force to study and make recommendations to improve child safety and well-being and achieve timely permanency outcomes for children in foster care.

WHEREAS, critical timeframes begin the moment that a child is taken into the custody of the state and placed in foster care as a result of being unsafe due to abuse or neglect; and

WHEREAS, timely and informed judicial decision-making in child welfare proceedings is essential to ensuring the ongoing safety and well-being of children in foster care; and

WHEREAS, each step in a foster care court proceeding has the potential to increase or decrease time for reunification, adoption, guardianship, or custody and thereby has a direct impact on achieving "permanency"; and

WHEREAS, a child's stay in foster care ends when permanency is achieved and expedited permanency prevents children from lingering in the foster care system; and

WHEREAS, federal and state law, including the Louisiana Children's Code, requires proceedings to be conducted expeditiously to avoid delays in achieving permanency for children; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana adopted the Administration for Children and Families' (ACF) "A Home for Every Child Initiative", which focuses on improving the foster care system for children and families by creating a faster and more efficient pathway to permanency; and

WHEREAS, the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) laid the foundation for establishing permanency as one of three critical child welfare system goals because permanency and child safety are crucial for achieving a child's well-being; and

WHEREAS, a complex structure of laws, judicial rules, policies, procedures, processes, and practices in Louisiana affect timelines to achieving permanency; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive approach will achieve timely permanency for children

in foster care.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby create the Child Permanency Task Force to study and make recommendations to improve child safety and well-being and achieve timely permanency outcomes for children in foster care, and to evaluate, report, and propose recommendations for legislation, court rule changes, professional training enhancements, and reforms to agency policy and practice.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall focus on guiding principles, which include, at a minimum, consideration of the following:

(1) Procedural barriers to permanency.

(2) Appropriate balance, consistent with federal and state law, between the due process rights of the parents and the need of the child for permanency when reunification is not readily available.

(3) Meaningful opportunity for foster caregivers to be heard at all stages of the proceeding, including in-court participation.

(4) Statutory and procedural timelines for child in need of care and termination of parental rights proceedings and appeals, including but not limited to trial court return dates, lodging of the appellate record, appellate procedure deadlines, issuance of judgments, and time delays for seeking supervisory or discretionary review.

(5) Continuances in child in need of care cases and termination of parental rights proceedings.

(6) Implementation of continuous quality improvement best practices.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Child Permanency Task Force shall be comprised of one representative, with expertise in the Louisiana Children's Code and other relevant laws, court rules, and policies, appointed by each of the following organizations:

(1) Louisiana Supreme Court.

(2) Louisiana Conference of Court of Appeal Judges.

(3) Louisiana Clerks of Court Association.

(4) Louisiana Court Administrators Association.

(5) Louisiana Court Reporters Association.

(6) Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

(7) Children's Code Committee of the Louisiana State Law Institute.

(8) Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services.

(9) Pelican Center for Children and Families.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force may seek input from other relevant organizations or persons with knowledge or expertise, including but not limited to:

(1) Louisiana District Attorneys Association.

(2) Louisiana District Judge Association.

(3) Mental Health Advocacy Service.

(4) Southeast Louisiana Legal Services Corporation.

(5) Acadiana Legal Services Corporation.

(6) Office of the state public defender.

(7) Louisiana Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Association.

(8) State child ombudsman.

(9) Current or former foster caregivers who have adopted a child out of foster care.

(10) Former foster youth.

(11) Former system-involved parents.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each designating authority shall submit the names of the designees and appointed members to the Louisiana Court Improvement Program of the Louisiana Supreme Court no later than July 1, 2026.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Court Improvement Program of the Louisiana Supreme Court and Department of Children and Family Services shall provide necessary staff to support the task force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Court Improvement Program of the Louisiana Supreme Court and Department of Children and Family Services shall communicate with all members and call meetings of the task force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall adopt rules of procedure and a meeting schedule, prepare an agenda for each meeting, and take any additional steps the task force determines necessary to accomplish its goals, timely prepare its report, and make its recommendations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall convene for its first meeting no later than August 1, 2026, at the call of the Louisiana Court Improvement Program of the Louisiana Supreme Court, and at the first meeting, the members shall elect officers as the task force may deem appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a majority of the task force shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. All official actions of the task force shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the members.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the task force shall serve without compensation, except per diem or expenses reimbursement to which the member may be individually entitled as a member of the respective organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall report its findings and propose recommendations, together with specific proposals for legislation, court rule changes, professional training enhancement, and agency policy and practice reform by written report to the Legislature of Louisiana and to the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library as required by R.S. 24:771 and 772, no later than February 1, 2027.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall terminate on the date of the submission of its report or February 1, 2027, whichever occurs first.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to all task force member organizations.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE