

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 44

BY SENATOR MARTINY

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court to create a Families in Need of Services Commission to study and issue recommendations regarding the governance, structure, target population, and necessary legislation for a Louisiana Families in Need of Services (FINS) system by submitting a report of its findings and recommendations to the Louisiana Legislature thirty days prior to the convening of the 2012 Regular Session of the Legislature.

WHEREAS, Title VII of the Children's Code, designated "Families In Need of Services" (FINS), contains provisions designed to help young people in families identified by specific misconduct on the part of the young people and their families so that appropriate services to remedy the family's dysfunction can be secured; and

WHEREAS, an "informal process" is included in Title VII which requires each court to appoint an intake officer to facilitate the establishment of a voluntary informal family services plan between the family and providers of needed services; and

WHEREAS, a body of research, practice, and legislation demonstrates the benefits and successes associated with treating status offenders in immediate, voluntary, and community-based services outside of the juvenile justice system.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court to create a Families in Need of Services Commission to study and issue recommendations for a restructuring of FINS operations to improve access to appropriate services for FINS families throughout Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court shall determine the composition of the commission and appoint its members.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court seek input from the Coordinated System of Care Governance Board, including the Department of Education, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Health and Hospitals and the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, youth services, and the office of juvenile justice.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission hold its organizational meeting prior to August 1, 2011.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, as part of its study, the commission shall review nationally recognized state and local model status offender systems and programs in consultation with Louisiana Models for Change, the MacArthur Foundation, and other key stakeholders.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission's study and recommendations shall address, but not be limited to:

(1) The identification of the state entity or agency best suited to govern, regulate, and oversee FINS services throughout the state.

(2) The refinement of a FINS target population that aligns with both national best practices and the unique needs of Louisiana's youth and families.

(3) The inclusion of fundamental components of model status offender programs in the recommended Louisiana system, including, but not limited to:

(a) Immediate crisis response mechanisms for youth and families.

(b) Screening, assessment, and appropriate referral to or provision of services that are tailored to meet the strengths and challenges of children and families.

(c) Referral to or provision of evidence-based services that are community-based, meaning they are located in, or as close as possible to, the community in which the family lives and with which it identifies culturally.

(d) Referral to or provision of services that are evidence-based, meaning they have been proven by research to work, or, alternatively, that are grounded in the same essential principles as evidence-based programs.

(4) The implementation of due diligence requirements that schools and other agencies provide that diligent efforts have been made prior to referral, ensuring that referring

agencies have attempted all appropriate internal interventions before referring to informal or formal FINS.

(5) Alternative graduated sanctions and the possible elimination of detention for status offending youth, which have been well-established to expose status offenders to negative peer influences and other harmful circumstances that can often worsen, rather than improve, their behavior.

(6) The selection of baseline data elements and a data management system to collect and track outcomes, which is essential for both the success and sustainability of reform.

(7) Proposed legislation for implementation of commission recommendations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission submit a report of its recommendations to the Louisiana Legislature thirty days prior to the convening of the 2012 Regular Session of the Legislature.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall terminate on December 31, 2012.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES