

ACT No. 117

2016 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 482

BY REPRESENTATIVES JEFFERSON, AMEDEE, BACALA, BAGNERIS, BARRAS, BERTHELOT, BILLIOT, BISHOP, BOUIE, BROADWATER, TERRY BROWN, CARMODY, CARPENTER, ROBBY CARTER, STEVE CARTER, CHANEY, CONNICK, COX, CROMER, DAVIS, DEVILLIER, EDMONDS, FALCONER, GAINES, GAROFALO, GISCLAIR, JIMMY HARRIS, LANCE HARRIS, HAZEL, HILFERTY, HOFFMANN, HORTON, HOWARD, HUNTER, JACKSON, JENKINS, MIKE JOHNSON, ROBERT JOHNSON, NANCY LANDRY, LEBAS, LOPINTO, LYONS, MAGEE, MARCELLE, MIGUEZ, JIM MORRIS, NORTON, PEARSON, POPE, PRICE, PYLANT, REYNOLDS, SCHEXNAYDER, SCHRODER, SEABAUGH, SMITH, STOKES, WHITE, WILLMOTT, AND ZERINGUE AND SENATORS BISHOP, BOUDREAUX, BROWN, ERDEY, LUNEAU, MILLS, AND WALSWORTH

1 AN ACT

2 To enact Chapter 35-A of Title 46 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be
3 comprised of R.S. 46:2431 through 2434, relative to foster care; to create and
4 provide for the Foster Care and Permanence Task Force; to provide for the
5 composition, functions, and duties of the task force; to provide for termination of the
6 task force; and to provide for related matters.

7 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

8 Section 1. Chapter 35-A of Title 46 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950,
9 comprised of R.S. 46:2431 through 2434, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

10 CHAPTER 35-A. FOSTER CARE AND PERMANENCE TASK FORCE

11 §2431. Declaration; purpose

12 A. The legislature hereby declares that the interests of the most vulnerable
13 children of this state are best served through policies designed to create lasting
14 connections for children who spend time in the state's foster care system.

15 B. The purpose of this Chapter is to create and provide for a task force to
16 study and make recommendations concerning best practices for achieving
17 permanency for foster children.

1 §2432. Task Force; creation; composition; meetings

2 A. There is hereby created the Foster Care and Permanence Task Force,
3 referred to hereafter as the "task force", which shall be composed of the following
4 members:

5 (1) Two members representing the Department of Children and Family
6 Services appointed by the secretary of the department, one of whom shall be a
7 representative of the foster care program of the office of children and family
8 services.

9 (2) The dean of the Southern University Nelson Mandela School of Public
10 Policy or his designee.

11 (3) The director of the Louisiana State University School of Social Work or
12 his designee.

13 (4) The executive director of the National Association of Social Workers,
14 Louisiana Chapter, or his designee.

15 (5) The president of LouisianaChildren.org or his designee.

16 (6) The executive director of the Louisiana Foster and Adoptive Parent
17 Association or his designee.

18 (7) A person who has served as a relative caretaker for a child in foster care
19 appointed by the secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services.

20 B. The secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services shall
21 take such actions as are necessary to ensure that the initial convening of the task
22 force occurs no later than October 1, 2016.

23 C. The task force members shall select a chairman annually, and he shall
24 serve as chairman without salary.

25 D. Task force members shall serve without compensation, except per diem
26 or expense reimbursement to which they may be individually entitled by their
27 respective employer organizations.

28 E. The task force shall hold at least two public meetings each year at a place
29 designated by the chairman.

1 §2433. Functions and duties of the task force

2 A. The functions of the task force shall include all of the following:

3 (1) Examination of means and best practices to ensure that foster children
 4 and adoptive children are placed in homes that can become permanent placements
 5 when reunification is not possible, thereby reducing the number of children who are
 6 moved repeatedly among different homes.

7 (2) Identification of means by which to assess persons applying to be foster
 8 parents, adoptive parents, and relative caretakers.

9 (3) Examination of means and best practices to encourage recruitment and
 10 retention of foster parents and relative caretakers.

11 (4) Examination of means to facilitate provision to foster parents and
 12 adoptive parents of all available information about a foster child's behavior before
 13 the child is placed with the foster or adoptive parents.

14 (5) Recommendation of means by which to ensure that adoption subsidies
 15 remain sufficient to meet the needs of an adoptive child and his adoptive parents as
 16 the child grows older.

17 (6) Recommendation of means by which to improve the rate of permanency
 18 among young people who are fourteen years of age or older and are in the state foster
 19 care system or in residential placement.

20 (7) Recommendations for a process to mediate conflicts between foster or
 21 adoptive parents and child placement agencies or biological parents.

22 (8) Identification of laws and agency policies that unduly serve as barriers
 23 to permanency.

24 (9) Identification of barriers with respect to recruitment of a competent
 25 workforce and substitute caretaker network.

26 (10) Examination of barriers with respect to placement resources.

27 B. On or before December 31, 2017, and semiannually thereafter, the task
 28 force shall prepare and submit to the governor and the legislature a report on the
 29 status and well-being of children in foster care, with a particular focus on any
 30 policies and practices which are facilitating or could likely facilitate a greater degree

1 of permanency for foster children. The report shall include any findings and
2 recommendations derived from the functions specified in Subsection A of this
3 Section.

4 §2434. Termination

5 The provisions of this Chapter shall terminate on January 1, 2018, and
6 thereafter shall be null, void, and without effect.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: _____