

SUBJECT: Developing a strategic plan for implementing certain foster care services

COMMITTEE: Human Services — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Frank, Hinojosa, Deshotel, Meza, Miller, Noble, Rose

0 nays

2 absent — Clardy, Klick

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, March 20 — 31-0

WITNESSES: For — Alyssa Jones, Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services; Marjan Linnell, Texas Pediatric Society and Texas Medical Association; Pamela McPeters, TexProtects, Texas Chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Anne Dunkelberg, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Chris Masey, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities; Christine Yanas, Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc.; Greg Hansch, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Texas; Will Francis, National Association of Social Workers-Texas Chapter; Kate Murphy, Texans Care for Children; Bryan Mares, Texas CASA; Reginald Smith, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition; Lauren Rose, Texas Network of Youth Services; Kevin Stewart, Texas Psychological Association; Nataly Saucedo, United Ways of Texas; Knox Kimberly, Upbring)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Liz Kromrei, Department of Family and Protective Services)

BACKGROUND: Family Code ch. 264, subch. B-1 governs the state's community-based care program, a foster care system formerly known as foster care redesign that involves contracting out foster care housing placement and transferring certain case management services from the Department of Family and Protective Services to private entities.

Interested parties note that while the federal Family First Prevention Services Act was signed into law in 2018 and permits the use of federal funds for foster care prevention services, Texas' network of service providers is not yet sufficient to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by that law. They suggest that creating a strategic plan would better prepare the state to implement the federal law's provisions.

DIGEST:

CSSB 355 would require the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to develop a strategic plan for the coordinated implementation of community-based care and foster care prevention services that met the requirements of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act.

The strategic plan would have to:

- identify a network of service providers to provide mental health, substance use, and in-home parenting support services for children at risk of entering foster care, the parents and caregivers of those children, and pregnant or parenting youth in foster care;
- identify methods for the statewide implementation of foster care prevention services, including implementation in department regions that were transitioning to community-based care;
- identify resources necessary for DFPS to coordinate the implementation of community-based care and foster care prevention services, including certain types of enhanced training, financial methodologies, and requirements for federal financial participation;
- identify methods to maximize federal resources and apply for other federal and private funding, reduce recidivism in foster care prevention services, and streamline efforts to provide and determine eligibility for mental health, substance abuse, and in-home parenting services;
- include a method to notify the relevant legislative committees on federal and private funding opportunities and respond to those opportunities; and

- identify opportunities to coordinate with independent researchers to assist community programs in evaluating and developing trauma-informed services and promising or supported services and strategies.

DFPS would have to consult with the Health and Human Services Commission, the Department of State Health Services, and community stakeholders in identifying the network of providers. The bill would not supersede or limit the duty of DFPS to develop and maintain the department's plan for implementing community-based care.

DFPS would have to submit the strategic plan to the governor, lieutenant governor, House speaker, and each member of the relevant legislative committees by December 30, 2019. These provisions would expire March 1, 2020.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2019.