

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/SB 204 — Task Force on the Monitoring of Children in Out-of-Home Care

by Fiscal Policy and Senators Rouson and Garcia

The bill establishes the Task Force on the Monitoring of Children in Out-of-Home Care (Task Force) adjunct to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). The Task Force is required to identify and counter the root causes of why children go missing while in out-of-home care and to ensure prompt and effective action to address such causes. The Task Force must examine and recommend improvements to current policies, procedures, programs, and initiatives and to ensure that timely and comprehensive steps are taken to find children who are missing for any reason, including, but not limited to, running away, human trafficking, and abduction by or absconding with a parent or an individual who does not have care or custody of the child.

The bill details the composition of the Task Force to be 13 members, including, but not limited to, a member of the Senate, a member of the House of Representatives, and representatives from the FDLE, the Guardian ad Litem program, and the community-based care lead agencies, a licensed foster parent, and a young adult who has aged out of the foster care system. Dates are specified for member appointments and the initial meeting of the Task Force.

The bill requires the Department of Children and Families to submit monthly reports through October 1, 2024, to assist the Task Force in fulfilling its duties and requires the Florida Institute for Child Welfare to conduct focus groups or individual interviews with children in out-of-home care and young adults who have aged out of the foster care system to examine why children leave their out-of-home placements and how to prevent them from leaving.

The bill requires the Task Force to submit a report with findings and recommendations to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by October 1, 2024.

The bill includes a date for repeal of the Task Force on June 30, 2025, unless reviewed and saved from repeal by the Legislature.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2023.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 117-0