

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/CS/HB 7141 — Human Trafficking

by Health and Human Services Committee; Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee; Healthy Families Subcommittee; Rep. Harrell and others (CS/SB 1724 by Appropriations Committee; and Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee)

Section 409.1678, F.S., governs safe homes. The bill changes statutory requirements for safe houses to establish standards for residential treatment of sexually exploited children and authorizes safe foster homes. The bill creates a certification program for safe houses and safe foster homes at the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and requires certification in order for these facilities to accept state funds specifically allocated to care for sexually exploited children.

The bill creates s. 409.1754, F.S., to establish requirements for DCF and the community-based care agencies (CBCs) related to sexually exploited children. The bill requires DCF to create or adopt initial screening and assessment instruments for use in identifying and serving sexually exploited children, and allows a child to be placed in a safe house if the assessment instrument determines that is the most appropriate setting and a safe house is available. The bill also requires DCF, the CBCs, and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to specially train certain employees to work with sexually exploited children. The bill requires DCF and the CBCs to hold multidisciplinary staffings to coordinate services for sexually exploited children.

Additionally, the bill requires DCF and the CBCs to plan and to have response protocols in place regarding serving sexually exploited children. The bill also requires DCF, the CBCs, and DJJ to participate on any local task forces related to this population.

Residential treatment centers and hospitals providing residential mental health treatment are required to provide specialized treatment for sexually exploited children in the custody of DCF placed in these facilities pursuant to existing law.

A statewide council on human trafficking is created within the Department of Legal Affairs, to enhance the development and coordination of law enforcement and social services responses and specifies the membership, organization, and duties of the council.

The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability is directed to conduct a study on commercial sexual exploitation of children in Florida and specifies topics for inclusion in the study.

DCF is required to contract with a qualified consultant or organization with expertise in child welfare by December 31, 2014, to prepare a plan for development and implementation of a comprehensive, results-oriented accountability program. Subject to a specific appropriation to implement the accountability program, DCF is directed to establish a technical advisory panel to advise the department on the implementation of the result-oriented accountability program. The

plan must be submitted to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House by February 1, 2015. The bill contains the scope of issues to be addressed in the plan.

The bill allows DCF to request to transfer up to \$3 million in general revenue funds for implementation of the provisions of this legislation, as well as to provide services to youth expected to be determined as sexually exploited.

The bill has a fiscal impact to DCF due to the bill's requirements regarding safe home and safe foster home certification and inspection, the creation and evaluation of a pilot program, the development of screening and assessment tools, and administrative modifications related to training and interdepartmental coordination efforts.

The bill also makes appropriations to DCF to implement the provisions of CS/SB 1666.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2014.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 118-0