



**THE FLORIDA SENATE**  
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*President*

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**Senate Introduces Key Child Welfare Legislation for 2025 Session**

*Recruit case managers, professional foster care pilot program, combat child sex trafficking*

**Tallahassee**—The Senate Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs, chaired by Senator Erin Grall (R-Vero Beach), today filed SB 7012, Child Welfare. The bill expands data collection to combat child exploitation, creates a recruitment program for child welfare professionals, and establishes a professional foster care pilot program to better serve children with high behavioral acuity.

“Our child welfare system is always something we have to work on. There’s always room for improvement. As hard as we try, government can never replace the role of family. The faster we can get children into loving, permanent homes, the better off those children will be in the long run,” said Senate President Ben Albritton (R-Wauchula). “Additionally, this bill addresses the need for more data collection to better analyze placement capacity and options for children who have been victims of commercial sexual exploitation. We know vicious criminals are out there each and every day in search of new ways to evade our laws and exploit vulnerable children. The more data we have on when and how this is happening, the better chance we have to stay one step ahead of these predators and keep vulnerable children safe.”

“Case managers and child protective investigators are a critical component of the child welfare system. This legislation will help Florida recruit retired law enforcement officers, emergency first responders, military servicemembers, teachers, healthcare practitioners, and others who have specific training and skills honed over their careers in other fields that will benefit vulnerable children in state care. This is a great opportunity for retirees to stay involved and continue to serve their communities,” said Senator Grall. “We know we do not currently have enough family-like foster placements for children with high behavioral acuity. The professional foster care pilot program will help us keep more children in a family-like setting with specifically trained foster care families.”

**Expands Data Collection to Combat Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children**

The bill requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to collect and provide specific data for children assessed for placement in safe houses and safe foster homes for better data analysis that can be used to stop the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

**Creates a Child Welfare Workforce Recruitment Program**

The bill requires the DCF to develop and implement a child protective investigator and case manager recruitment program to recruit individuals who have previously held public safety and service positions. For example, individuals such as retired law enforcement officers, emergency first responders, military servicemembers, teachers, healthcare practitioners, and emergency management professionals that have a continued desire to serve their community are the intended recruitment population.

DCF would collaborate with Community-Based Care lead agencies to distribute information about employment opportunities; develop an employee referral system for case managers; and collect and update quarterly outcome data of the program.

Additionally, DCF would convene a case management workforce workgroup to analyze current case management practices and any gaps to develop clear and actionable recommendations for improving case management. The workgroup would convene by July 1, 2025 and operate through December 1, 2025, and submit a report summarizing its findings with actionable policy recommendations by December 1, 2025.

**Establishes a Professional Foster Care Pilot Program**

The bill requires the DCF to create a 4-year pilot program to place children with high behavioral acuity and potential frequent placement disruption in the least restrictive, family-like setting possible, with specifically trained foster care families that receive enhanced compensation to be the sole caregiver and a coordinator of services for those children.

The bill requires an independent evaluation of the pilot to determine cost-effectiveness and outcomes, and a final report including the findings of the independent evaluation and the feasibility of expanding the pilot program statewide.

For more information, please visit [www.FLSenate.gov](http://www.FLSenate.gov).

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