

STORAGE NAME: h0039a.flc
DATE: April 6, 1999

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON
FAMILY LAW AND CHILDREN
ANALYSIS**

BILL #: HB 39
RELATING TO: Foster Care Pilot in Alachua and Citrus Counties
SPONSOR(S): Representative Chestnut
COMPANION BILL(S): SB 1190

ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:

- (1) Family Law and Children YEAS 4 NAYS 1
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I. SUMMARY:

The bill creates a pilot project for children in foster care or relative care placement in Alachua and Citrus Counties to provide specialized educational and other support services to those children as well as the foster parents or relative caregivers.

There is a fiscal impact from the bill.

II. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

A. PRESENT SITUATION:

Several issues that are problematic as they relate to the current system of providing care and services to children in either foster care or relative caregiver placements include the high rate of disruption of these children, the retention of foster care parents, and the lack of support services for these children and their caregivers. There is no program in existence providing the services proposed by this bill.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Children in Foster Care or Relative Care Placements

The bill creates an educational enhancement project for children who are in foster care or relative care designed to:

- provide a support system for achieving the educational goals of children in out of home care;
- provide a seamless system addressing the home, school and community needs of children in out of home care;
- achieve an integrated service system to meet the specific needs of each child in the program;
- reduce the disruption of children in out of home placements;
- increase the retention of foster parents through increased support and professionalism; and
- provide support for relative caregivers to enable them to better care for children.

The goals of the project would be accomplished by providing for reduced caseloads, increased inservice training and a salary for foster parents, additional support to foster parents and relative caregivers through four family liaison specialists, services to children in foster care or relative placement through educational and other support services provided by the Anchor Center in Alachua County, and training to licensed foster parents and relative caregivers to enhance child-caring skills.

The Anchor School in Alachua County

The pilot is designed to offer a stable school placement for children in out of home care by placing them at the Anchor School in Alachua County for the entire school year, regardless of how many moves the child makes in the foster care system.

The Anchor Center opened in January of 1997. The school is an innovative program for elementary school students developed to help highly mobile students attain academic success. Enrollment at the Center provides these students who have experienced two or more moves in their school career with the stability of a permanent school home. The school is connected by a transportation network to all areas of Alachua County, so students from anywhere within the county can still access the facility.

C. APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES:

1. Less Government:

a. Does the bill create, increase or reduce, either directly or indirectly:

(1) any authority to make rules or adjudicate disputes?

N/A

(2) any new responsibilities, obligations or work for other governmental or private organizations or individuals?

N/A

(3) any entitlement to a government service or benefit?

N/A

b. If an agency or program is eliminated or reduced:

(1) what responsibilities, costs and powers are passed on to another program, agency, level of government, or private entity?

N/A

(2) what is the cost of such responsibility at the new level/agency?

N/A

(3) how is the new agency accountable to the people governed?

N/A

2. Lower Taxes:

a. Does the bill increase anyone's taxes?

No.

b. Does the bill require or authorize an increase in any fees?

No.

c. Does the bill reduce total taxes, both rates and revenues?

No.

d. Does the bill reduce total fees, both rates and revenues?

No.

e. Does the bill authorize any fee or tax increase by any local government?

No.

3. Personal Responsibility:

a. Does the bill reduce or eliminate an entitlement to government services or subsidy?

N/A

b. Do the beneficiaries of the legislation directly pay any portion of the cost of implementation and operation?

N/A

4. Individual Freedom:

a. Does the bill increase the allowable options of individuals or private organizations/associations to conduct their own affairs?

N/A

- b. Does the bill prohibit, or create new government interference with, any presently lawful activity?

N/A

5. Family Empowerment:

- a. If the bill purports to provide services to families or children:

- (1) Who evaluates the family's needs?

The Department of Children and Family Services

- (2) Who makes the decisions?

The Department of Children and Family Services

- (3) Are private alternatives permitted?

N/A

- (4) Are families required to participate in a program?

No.

- (5) Are families penalized for not participating in a program?

No.

- b. Does the bill directly affect the legal rights and obligations between family members?

N/A

- c. If the bill creates or changes a program providing services to families or children, in which of the following does the bill vest control of the program, either through direct participation or appointment authority:

- (1) parents and guardians?

Yes.

- (2) service providers?

Yes.

- (3) government employees/agencies?

Yes.

D. STATUTE(S) AFFECTED:

The bill creates a foster care pilot for Alachua and Citrus Counties and does not designate a specific location in the Florida Statutes.

E. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:

Section 1. Provides that the Department of Children and Family Services develop a pilot project in Alachua and Citrus Counties with licensed child-placing agencies to provide a specialized educational enhancement program for children in foster care placements or relative placements. The pilot would provide:

- reduced caseloads;
- increased inservice training and a salary for foster parents;
- additional support to foster parents and relative caregivers through four family liaison specialists;
- services to children in foster care or relative placement through educational and other support services provided by the Anchor Center in Alachua County; and
- training to licensed foster parents and relative caregivers to enhance child-caring skills.

Every effort will be made for employees of the project to be individuals who are served by the WAGES Program and the pilot is to be operational by October 1, 1999.

Section 2. Provides an effective date of July 1, 1999.

III. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE AGENCIES/STATE FUNDS:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

See fiscal note.

2. Recurring Effects:

See fiscal note.

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

N/A

4. Total Revenues and Expenditures:

See fiscal note.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AS A WHOLE:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

N/A

2. Recurring Effects:

N/A

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

N/A

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

1. Direct Private Sector Costs:

N/A

2. Direct Private Sector Benefits:

N/A

3. Effects on Competition, Private Enterprise and Employment Markets:

N/A

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The estimated costs for the pilot are a **9 month start up cost of \$484,248** and an **annual cost of \$585,530.**

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

This bill does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

This bill does not reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate.

C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

V. COMMENTS:

The Department of Children and Family Services reports that the pilot cannot be implemented unless it is fully funded and while the children in the two county area will most likely recognize benefit from the enhancements and services, these positive effects will not be seen in the remainder of the counties unless similar projects are funded statewide. No funding source is identified in the bill.

It is not clear how many children and families will be served by the pilot or how they will be selected for participation in the pilot to receive the enhanced support services, stipends, and educational benefits. It is also unclear how long children and families would be eligible to remain in the stable school setting.

It is out of the ordinary to have the creation of a pilot affecting a limited geographical area be the sole subject of a bill.

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

N/A

VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON FAMILY LAW AND CHILDREN:

Prepared by:

Staff Director:

Carol Preston

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