

By the Committee on Children and Families; and Senator Campbell

300-2156-02

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A bill to be entitled
An act relating to fatherhood, parenting, and family issues; expressing legislative findings and intent; creating the Commission on Marriage and Family Support Initiatives within the Department of Children and Family Services; providing for membership; providing scope of activity; providing for coordination with other organizations and entities; providing for funding the commission; repealing ss. 383.0112, 383.0113, 383.0114, F.S., relating to the Commission on Responsible Fatherhood; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 39.320, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

39.320 The Commission on Marriage and Family Support Initiatives.--

(1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.--

(a) The Legislature finds that families in this state deserve respect and support. Children need support and guidance from both mothers and fathers, and families need support and guidance from community systems to help them thrive.

(b) The Legislature finds that there are many problems facing families, including, but not limited to, poverty, exposure to crime and drugs, exposure to violence, and lack of access to needed educational and job-skills opportunities.

1 (c) The Legislature finds that Florida is a state rich
2 in diversity, and its population and families come from all
3 over the world, representing many cultures, languages, belief
4 systems, and experiences.

5 (d) The Legislature also finds that while some
6 relationships between mothers and fathers are broken and
7 beyond repair, others can be nurtured and salvaged with the
8 provision of appropriate community supports to fathers as well
9 as mothers. For parents, these supports may include
10 opportunities to obtain or increase educational levels and
11 employment skills, access to the justice system, support from
12 community agencies to help them become free of substance abuse
13 and violent relationships, and easy, affordable access to
14 relationship-skills education. For some unwed parents, it will
15 be possible and desirable to help them move towards marriage
16 and for others, the optimum goal may be to help them
17 co-parent, spend time with their child, and pay child support
18 regularly.

19 (e) The Legislature finds that assisting states to end
20 dependence of low-income parents, by promoting job
21 preparation, work, and marriage, and assisting states to
22 encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families
23 are the two of four stated purposes of federal welfare reform
24 enacted in 1996 which have been largely neglected by states
25 and for which states are now urging Congress to designate 10
26 percent of all welfare funds for relationship education and
27 skills development, responsible fatherhood programs, and
28 community support as it seeks to reauthorize the Temporary
29 Assistance for Needy Families Act in 2002.

30 (f) The Legislature further finds that public policy
31 should not operate to force people to get married, should not

1 withdraw or diminish benefits to single mothers merely because
2 they are not married, and should not encourage people to stay
3 in abusive relationships.

4 (g) It is therefore the intent of the Legislature to
5 build on the accomplishments of the Commission on Responsible
6 Fatherhood, which has achieved recognition as a national model
7 of a comprehensive statewide strategy to address fatherhood
8 issues; to increase public awareness of the problems of
9 families, including failing marriages, violence, poverty,
10 substance abuse, and lack of access to community systems,
11 help, and other supports families need; and to continue to
12 develop sound public policy related to parenting, marriage,
13 and the effects of poverty, violence, and abuse on children
14 and their families through the work of the Commission on
15 Marriage and Family Support Initiatives. The Legislature
16 further intends that, to the extent practicable, the laws of
17 this state should do all that is possible to provide support
18 for children and to encourage, promote, and value strong,
19 safe, and long-term marriages and family life that includes
20 grandparents, family members, community support, and all that
21 children need to grow up healthy and to thrive.

22 (2) ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.--

23 (a) There is created within the Department of Children
24 and Family Services the Commission on Marriage and Family
25 Support Initiatives. The commission shall consist of 18
26 members, with the Governor, the President of the Senate, and
27 the Speaker of the House of Representatives each appointing 6
28 members. The commission must contain a minimum of 50-percent
29 representation from the private sector. The commission members
30 shall include representatives of business, workforce
31 development, education, state government, local government,

1 the judicial system, the health-care sector, the
2 substance-abuse treatment community, domestic violence
3 centers, child development specialists, and community and
4 faith-based organizations. The commission may also create
5 liaisons with other agencies and organizations to carry out
6 its mission. Liaisons may be designated with state and local
7 government agencies and others as the commission sees fit.

8 (b) Initially, the Governor, the President of the
9 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall
10 each appoint as members meeting the qualifications contained
11 in paragraph (1) two members for terms of 3 years each, two
12 members for terms of 2 years each, and two members for terms
13 of 1 year each. Thereafter, after receiving recommendations
14 from the commission, the Governor, the President of the
15 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall
16 appoint all members for terms of 2 years. Any vacancy shall be
17 filled by appointment by the original appointing authority for
18 the unexpired portion of the term of a person who possesses
19 the proper qualifications for the vacancy.

20 (c) The members of the commission shall elect one of
21 their members to serve as chair. For the purpose of
22 maintaining continuity with the work of the Commission on
23 Responsible Fatherhood, the individual serving as the chair of
24 the Commission on Responsible Fatherhood at the time of the
25 effective date of this act shall remain as the chair of the
26 Commission on Marriage and Family Support Initiatives for a
27 term of 1 year, unless subsequently reelected by the members
28 of the commission.

29 (d) Members of the commission are not entitled to
30 compensation for their services as members, but are entitled
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1 to reimbursement for travel expenses as provided in s.
2 112.061.

3 (e) The commission shall meet semiannually and more
4 frequently upon call of the chair. The commission may conduct
5 its meetings through teleconferences or other similar means.

6 (3) SCOPE OF ACTIVITY.--The commission shall:

7 (a) Develop a report that details comprehensive
8 statewide strategies for Florida to promote safe,
9 violence-free, substance-abuse-free, respectful, nurturing,
10 and responsible parenting, including the connection or
11 reconnection of responsible parents, both mothers and fathers,
12 with their families and children.

13 (b) Develop a report that makes recommendations on how
14 to increase the availability of and access to parenting and
15 relationship-skills education and training, and to encourage
16 and support the formation and maintenance of two-parent
17 families and family structures that are best for the children
18 concerned. This shall include providing a plan for delivering
19 services and supports to couples and families to help them
20 learn communication and conflict-resolution skills prior to
21 marriage, enable couples to refresh those skills periodically
22 during marriage and, if the marriage fails, provide divorce
23 education, safety planning, and mediation techniques that
24 teach parents how to be safe, to work through their problems,
25 and to minimize the impact of the divorce on their children.

26 (c) Produce and promote a promising practices manual
27 or tool that highlights successful efforts at promoting
28 marriage, families, and family life.

29 (d) Develop a community awareness campaign to promote
30 community collaboration and coordinated grass-roots programs
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1 that show how people, advocates, and agencies can work
2 together to promote marriage in Florida families.

3 (e) Serve as a clearinghouse for collecting and
4 disseminating information related to research findings on
5 poverty, violence, and other social forces and their effects
6 on families, and innovative approaches to the delivery of
7 services necessary for the formation and maintenance of strong
8 families.

9 (f) By December 31 of each year, beginning December
10 31, 2002, issue an annual report to the Governor, the
11 President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of
12 Representatives, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on
13 progress it is making on its responsibilities.

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15 The Commission on Marriage and Family Support Initiatives
16 shall stand repealed on June 30, 2007, unless reviewed and
17 saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

18 (4) COORDINATION.--The commission shall coordinate its
19 work with community-based organizations, including those that
20 are faith-based; with schools, courts, certified local
21 domestic violence centers, adult and juvenile criminal justice
22 systems, and agencies providing social welfare, welfare
23 transition, and child support services; and with any
24 appropriate research and policy development centers,
25 including, but not limited to, those within universities which
26 focus on issues related to families, fatherhood, motherhood,
27 low-income families, marriages, children and poverty,
28 parenting, and relationship skills.

29 (5) FUNDING.--The operation of the Commission on
30 Marriage and Family Support Initiatives shall be funded from
31 general revenue funds currently allocated to the Commission on

1 Responsible Fatherhood, shall maintain the current connection
2 with the Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida, and shall
3 support and continue any community-based programs established
4 by the Commission on Responsible Fatherhood. The Commission on
5 Marriage and Family Support Initiatives may seek and accept
6 grants, funds, or gifts from any source, public or private, or
7 federal, state, or local, to supplement its operation and
8 defray the expenses incurred in the operation and
9 implementation of this section.

10 Section 2. Sections 383.0112, 383.0113, and 383.0114,
11 Florida Statutes, are repealed.

12 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2002.

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14 STATEMENT OF SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES CONTAINED IN
15 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
16 Senate Bill 1684

17 Creates the Commission on Marriage and Family Support
18 Initiatives within the Department of Children and Families.

19 Provides for the responsibilities of the commission.

20 Provides for the membership of the commission.

21 Requires that the commission coordinate with community-based
22 organizations.

23 Requires that the commission submit an annual report.

24 Repeals the Commission on Responsible Fatherhood.

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