

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to children and families;
3 creating s. 39.320, F.S.; providing legislative
4 findings and intent; creating the Commission on
5 Marriage and Family Support Initiatives within
6 the Department of Children and Family Services;
7 providing for membership; providing scope of
8 activity; providing for coordination with other
9 organizations and entities; providing for
10 funding of the commission; repealing ss.
11 383.0112, 383.0113, and 383.0114, F.S.,
12 relating to the Commission on Responsible
13 Fatherhood and community-based programs to
14 encourage responsible fatherhood; providing an
15 effective date.

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

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

21 39.320 The Commission on Marriage and Family Support
22 Initiatives.--

23 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.--

24 (a) the Legislature finds that Florida families
25 deserve respect and support. Children need support and
26 guidance from both mothers and fathers, and families need
27 support and guidance from community systems to help them
28 thrive.

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

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

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

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

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1 (f) The Legislature further finds that public policy
2 should not operate to force people to get married, should not
3 withdraw or diminish benefits to single mothers merely because
4 they are not married, and should not keep people in abusive
5 relationships.

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

24 (2) ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.--

25 (a) There is created within the Department of Children
26 and Family Services the Commission on Marriage and Family
27 Support Initiatives. The commission shall consist of 18
28 members, with 6 each appointed by the Governor, the President
29 of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
30 Representatives. The commission must contain a minimum of 50
31 percent representation from the private sector. The commission

1 members shall include representatives of business, workforce
2 development, education, state government, local government,
3 the judicial system, the health care sector, the substance
4 abuse community, domestic violence centers, child development,
5 and community and faith-based organizations. The commission
6 may also designate liaisons to work with it to carry out its
7 mission. Liaisons may be designated from state and local
8 government agencies and others as the commission sees fit.

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

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

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1 (d) Members of the commission shall not be entitled to
2 compensation for their services as members, but shall be
3 reimbursed for travel expenses as provided in s. 112.061.

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

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

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

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

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

30 (d) Develop a community awareness campaign to promote
31 community collaboration and coordinated grass-roots programs

1 that show how people, advocates and agencies can work together
2 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 on
6 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.

14 (g) The Commission on Marriage and Family Support
15 Initiatives shall stand repealed on June 30, 2007, unless
16 reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the
17 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 that
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, and shall support and
3 continue any community-based programs established by the
4 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,
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.