



CHAMBER ACTION

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The Committee on Future of Florida's Families recommends the following:

**Committee Substitute**

Remove the entire bill and insert:

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to children and families; providing legislative findings and intent; creating the Commission on Marriage and Family Support Initiatives within the Department of Children and Family Services for administrative purposes; providing for membership; providing scope of activity; requiring the development of certain documents; providing for coordination with other organizations and entities; providing for funding of the commission; repealing ss. 383.0112, 383.0113, and 383.0114, F.S., relating to the Commission on Responsible Fatherhood and community-based programs to encourage responsible fatherhood; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. The Commission on Marriage and Family Support Initiatives.--



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29        (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.--The Legislature  
30 finds that:

31        (a) Families in this state deserve respect and support.  
32 Children need support and guidance from both mothers and fathers  
33 and families need support and guidance from community systems to  
34 help them thrive.

35        (b) There are many problems facing families.

36        (c) Florida is a state rich in diversity, and its  
37 population and families come from all over the world,  
38 representing many cultures, languages, belief systems, and  
39 experiences.

40        (d) While some relationships between mothers and fathers  
41 are broken and beyond repair, others can be nurtured and  
42 salvaged with the provision of appropriate community support to  
43 fathers as well as mothers. For parents, this support may  
44 include opportunities to obtain or increase educational levels  
45 and employment skills, access to the justice system, support  
46 from community agencies to help them become free of substance  
47 abuse and violent relationships, and easy and affordable access  
48 to relationship-skills education. For some unwed parents, it  
49 will be possible and desirable to help them move towards  
50 marriage; for others, the optimum goal may be to help them co-  
51 parent, spend time with their child, and pay child support  
52 regularly.

53        (e) Assisting states to end dependence of low-income  
54 parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage and  
55 assisting states in encouraging the formation and maintenance of  
56 two-parent families are two of four stated purposes of federal



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57 welfare reform enacted in 1996 which have been largely neglected  
58 by states and for which states are now urging Congress to  
59 designate 10 percent of all welfare funds, specifically for  
60 relationship education and skills development, responsible  
61 fatherhood programs, and community support as it seeks to  
62 reauthorize the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Act in  
63 2004.

64 (f) Public policy should not operate to force people to  
65 get married, should not withdraw or diminish benefits to single  
66 mothers merely because they are not married, and should not keep  
67 people in abusive relationships.

68  
69 It is therefore the intent of the Legislature to build on the  
70 accomplishments of the Commission on Responsible Fatherhood,  
71 which has achieved recognition as a national model of a  
72 comprehensive statewide strategy to address fatherhood issues;  
73 to increase public awareness of the problems of families,  
74 including failing marriages, violence, poverty, substance abuse,  
75 and lack of access to community systems and support that  
76 families need; and to continue to develop sound public policy  
77 related to parenting, marriage, and the effects of poverty,  
78 violence, and abuse on children and their families through the  
79 work of the Commission on Marriage and Family Support  
80 Initiatives. The Legislature further intends that, to the extent  
81 practicable, the laws of this state should do all that is  
82 possible to provide support for children and encourage, promote,  
83 and value strong, safe, long-term marriages and family life that



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84 includes grandparents, family members, community support, and  
85 all that children need to grow up healthy and to thrive.

86 (2) ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.--

87 (a) There is created within the Department of Children and  
88 Family Services, for administrative purposes, a commission, as  
89 defined in s. 20.03(10), Florida Statutes, called the Commission  
90 on Marriage and Family Support Initiatives. The commission is  
91 independent of the head of the department. The commission is  
92 authorized to hire an executive director, a researcher, and an  
93 administrative assistant. The executive director shall report  
94 to, and serve at the pleasure of, the commission.

95 (b) The commission shall consist of 18 members. The  
96 commission shall consist of members from the public sector and  
97 the private sector, including community and faith-based  
98 organizations, but at least 50 percent of the commissioners  
99 shall be from the private sector. Commissioners should have  
100 experience in one or more of the following areas: business,  
101 workforce development, education, health care, treatment of  
102 substance abuse, child development, and domestic violence  
103 prevention. The Governor, the President of the Senate, and the  
104 Speaker of the House of Representatives shall each appoint six  
105 members to the commission. Initial appointments shall be made by  
106 August 1, 2003. For the initial appointments, the Governor, the  
107 President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of  
108 Representatives shall consider making appointments from the  
109 current members of the Commission on Responsible Fatherhood.

110 (c) Each commissioner shall serve a 2-year term, except  
111 that for the initial appointments to the commission, the



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112 Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the  
113 House of Representatives shall each appoint two members for  
114 terms of 3 years each, two members for terms of 2 years each,  
115 and two members for terms of 1 year each. A vacancy shall be  
116 filled by appointment by the original appointing authority for  
117 the unexpired portion of the term.

118 (d) The first meeting of the commission shall be no later  
119 than October 1, 2003. Commissioners shall elect a chair at the  
120 first meeting by a majority vote of the members present, a  
121 quorum being present. A majority of the membership constitutes a  
122 quorum.

123 (e) A quorum shall be required for the commission to meet  
124 and to conduct business. The commission shall meet semiannually  
125 and more frequently upon call of the chair. The commission may  
126 conduct its meetings through teleconferences or other similar  
127 means.

128 (f) Commissioners are not entitled to compensation for  
129 their services as members, but may be reimbursed for per diem  
130 and travel expenses as provided in s. 112.061, Florida Statutes.

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

132 (a) Develop the following documents by October 1, 2004,  
133 and, upon their completion, submit a copy to the Governor, the  
134 President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of  
135 Representatives, and the secretary of the department:

136 1. A report that details comprehensive statewide  
137 strategies for Florida to promote safe, violence-free,  
138 substance-abuse-free, respectful, nurturing, and responsible  
139 parenting, including connection or reconnection of responsible



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140 parents, both mothers and fathers, with their families and  
141 children.

142 2. A report that makes recommendations on how to increase  
143 the availability of and access to parenting and relationship  
144 skills education and training, and to encourage and support the  
145 formation and maintenance of two-parent families and family  
146 structures that are best for the children. This shall include  
147 providing a plan for delivering services and support to couples  
148 and families to help them learn communication and conflict-  
149 resolution skills prior to marriage, enable couples to refresh  
150 those skills periodically during marriage, and, if the marriage  
151 fails, provide divorce education, safety planning, and mediation  
152 techniques that teach parents how to be safe and to work through  
153 their problems and how to minimize the impact of the divorce on  
154 their children.

155 3. A promising practices manual or tool that highlights  
156 successful efforts at promoting marriage and Florida families  
157 and family life.

158 (b) Develop a community awareness campaign to promote  
159 community collaboration and coordinated grass roots programs  
160 that show how people, advocates, and agencies can work together  
161 to promote marriage in Florida families.

162 (c) Serve as a clearinghouse for collecting and  
163 disseminating information related to research findings on  
164 poverty, violence, and other social forces and their effects on  
165 families and innovative approaches to the delivery of services  
166 necessary for the formation and maintenance of strong families.



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167 (d) By December 31 of each year, beginning December 31,  
168 2003, issue an annual report to the Governor, the President of  
169 the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the  
170 Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on progress it is making on  
171 its responsibilities.

172 (4) COORDINATION.--The commission shall coordinate its  
173 work with community-based organizations, including those that  
174 are faith-based; with schools, courts, certified local domestic  
175 violence centers, adult and juvenile criminal justice systems,  
176 and agencies providing social welfare, welfare transition, and  
177 child support services; and with any appropriate research and  
178 policy development centers, including, but not limited to, those  
179 within universities that focus on issues related to families,  
180 fatherhood, motherhood, low-income families, marriages, children  
181 and poverty, scientific methods to determine paternity for the  
182 purpose of addressing support issues, parenting, and  
183 relationship skills.

184 (5) FUNDING.--The operation of the Commission on Marriage  
185 and Family Support Initiatives shall be funded from general  
186 revenue funds currently allocated to the Commission on  
187 Responsible Fatherhood, shall maintain the current connection  
188 with the Ounce of Prevention Fund, and shall support and  
189 continue any community-based programs established by the  
190 Commission on Responsible Fatherhood. The Commission on Marriage  
191 and Family Support Initiatives may seek and accept grants or  
192 funds from any public source, federal, state, or local, to  
193 supplement its operation and defray the expenses incurred in the  
194 operation and implementation of this section.



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195 |       (6) This section is repealed on June 30, 2008, unless  
196 | reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the  
197 | Legislature.

198 |       Section 2. Sections 383.0112, 383.0113, and 383.0114,  
199 | Florida Statutes, are repealed.

200 |       Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2003.

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