

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to luggage for children placed in out-
3 of-home care; providing a short title; creating s.
4 39.4011, F.S.; providing legislative findings and
5 intent; providing construction; providing definitions;
6 requiring the Department of Children and Families to
7 provide certain children with a piece of luggage for
8 certain purposes; providing department requirements;
9 requiring the department to submit a specified annual
10 report to the Legislature; providing sources of
11 funding for the distribution of pieces of luggage;
12 requiring the department's direct-support organization
13 to receive and use funding for certain purposes;
14 amending ss. 39.401 and 39.4085, F.S.; conforming
15 provisions to changes made by the act; providing an
16 effective date.

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

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20 **Section 1.** This act may be cited as the "Fostering with
21 Dignity Act."

22 **Section 2.** **Section 39.4011, Florida Statutes, is created**
23 **to read:**

24 39.4011 Luggage for children placed in out-of-home care.-

25 (1) (a) The Legislature finds that children being placed in

26 out-of-home care often transport their personal belongings in
27 trash bags, which intensifies emotional distress for the child
28 and reinforces his or her feelings of disposability.
29 Accordingly, the Legislature intends that every child in this
30 state being placed in out-of-home care be provided with a
31 suitable reusable bag, suitcase, or backpack in order to promote
32 dignity, emotional well-being, and stability during the child's
33 transition.

34 (b) This section must be construed to advance the dignity,
35 emotional well-being, and stability of children being placed in
36 out-of-home care. This section may not be construed to limit or
37 impede existing rights, services, or protections afforded to
38 children in out-of-home care under federal or state law.

39 (2) As used in this section, the term:

40 (a) "Community-based care lead agency" has the same
41 meaning as in s. 409.986(3).

42 (b) "Luggage" means a suitcase, duffel bag, backpack, or
43 other similar container or bag with handles that is made of
44 durable material and designed for multiple uses including
45 holding a person's personal belongings.

46 (c) "Public-private partnership" means a partnership
47 between the department and a private entity, the purpose of
48 which is to finance, build, and operate projects that serve a
49 public purpose.

50 (3) Upon taking a child into its custody pursuant to s.

51 39.401, the department must provide each child entering out-of-
52 home care with a suitable piece of luggage for the storage and
53 transport of his or her personal belongings.

54 (4) The department shall do all of the following:

55 (a) Establish and maintain a decentralized supply of
56 luggage to be used to transport a child's personal belongings.

57 (b) Develop procedures for the storage and distribution of
58 luggage.

59 (c) Collaborate with community-based care lead agencies,
60 advocacy groups, business partners, or entities in a public-
61 private partnership with the department to coordinate logistics
62 and the distribution of pieces of luggage.

63 (d) Pursue strategic partnerships to ensure that each
64 child entering out-of-home care receives a piece of luggage to
65 store and transport the child's personal belongings. The
66 department may solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations
67 of any kind and from any source for purposes of this section.

68 (e) Provide a piece of luggage to a child who is being
69 removed from the child's home or changing placements. The piece
70 of luggage provided to a child under this section belongs to the
71 child and may not be reclaimed by the department or retained by
72 the person with whom the child is placed. The department is not
73 required to provide a new piece of luggage to a child who is
74 changing placements and has the piece of luggage that was
75 previously provided by the department.

76 (f) Maintain a record of each time a trash bag is used to
77 move a child's personal belongings. The record must include the
78 reason the department did not provide the child with an
79 appropriate piece of luggage to move the child's personal
80 belongings.

81 (g) Submit to the Legislature an annual report that
82 includes the following information:

83 1. The number of times a trash bag was used to transport a
84 child's personal belongings and the reason the department did
85 not provide the child with an appropriate piece of luggage.

86 2. The department's luggage supply inventory and its
87 management practices for the supply of luggage maintained by the
88 department.

89 (5) Funding for the distribution of pieces of luggage to
90 children entering out-of-home care may come from any of the
91 following:

92 (a) Federal funds, including federal Title IV-E
93 assistance.

94 (b) Matching grant program agreements with or donations
95 from community and business entities.

96 (c) Public-private partnerships.

97 (6) Pursuant to s. 402.57(5)(a), the department's direct-
98 support organization shall collect the funding received under
99 subsection (5) and use such funding to help administer this
100 section.

Section 3. Subsection (4) of section 39.401, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

39.401 Taking a child alleged to be dependent into custody; law enforcement officers and authorized agents of the department.—

(4) When a child is taken into custody pursuant to this section, the department shall:

(a) Request that the child's parent, caregiver, or legal custodian disclose the names, relationships, and addresses of all parents and prospective parents and all next of kin of the child, so far as are known.

(b) Provide each child entering out-of-home care with a piece of luggage, as defined in s. 39.4011, for the storage and transport of his or her personal belongings.

Section 4. Paragraph (c) of subsection (1) of section 39.4085, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

39.4085 Goals for dependent children; responsibilities; education; Office of the Children's Ombudsman.—

(1) The Legislature finds that the design and delivery of child welfare services should be directed by the principle that the health and safety of children, including the freedom from abuse, abandonment, or neglect, is of paramount concern and, therefore, establishes the following goals for children in shelter or foster care:

(c) To have their privacy protected;~~;~~7 have their personal

126 belongings secure and transported with them in a manner that
127 promotes their dignity, emotional well-being, and stability,
128 including the provision of at least one piece of luggage when
129 they are placed in out-of-home care;~~7~~ and, unless otherwise
130 ordered by the court, have uncensored communication, including
131 receiving and sending unopened communications and having access
132 to a telephone.

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134 This subsection establishes goals and not rights. This
135 subsection does not require the delivery of any particular
136 service or level of service in excess of existing
137 appropriations. A person does not have a cause of action against
138 the state or any of its subdivisions, agencies, contractors,
139 subcontractors, or agents, based upon the adoption of or failure
140 to provide adequate funding for the achievement of these goals
141 by the Legislature. This subsection does not require the
142 expenditure of funds to meet the goals established in this
143 subsection except those funds specifically appropriated for such
144 purpose.

145 **Section 5.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.