AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CHILD WELFARE AND POLICY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes a 29-member Child Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee. The committee must monitor and evaluate state child welfare system policies and practices to ensure that:

1. children are protected from abuse or neglect;
2. preventable child fatalities are reduced or eliminated;
3. children have permanent and stable living situations, are placed in family settings whenever possible, and do not leave the child welfare system into homelessness;
4. children of color are not disproportionately represented in the child welfare system;
5. children timely receive appropriate and adequate services to meet their physical, mental health, and developmental needs;
6. children do not remain in institutional settings longer than necessary; and
7. state agencies collaborate to establish protocols to achieve these goals.

The bill requires the council to annually report its findings and recommendations to the Children’s Committee, beginning by January 1, 2020.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019

MEMBERSHIP
Under the bill, the council must include the chairpersons and ranking members of the Children’s Committee and the following officials or their designees:

1. the commissioners of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Office of Early Childhood (OEC), and Department of Children and Families (DCF);
2. the child advocate;
3. the chief public defender;
4. the chief court administrator; and
5. the Commission on Women, Children, and Seniors (CWCS) executive director.

The bill must also include 18 appointees, as described in Table 1.

**Table 1: Committee Appointees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appointing Authority</th>
<th>Number of Appointees</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House Speaker</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Child and family advocates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate President Pro Tempore</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Licensed attorneys with expertise in children’s legal issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Majority Leader</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Licensed pediatrician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Minority Leader</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Child behavioral health services provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate Majority Leader</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Licensed child psychiatrist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate Minority Leader</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>School superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCF commissioner</td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Two providers of therapeutic or support services to families DCF serves; two representatives of private foundations that provide child and family services; and one parent or guardian of a child with mental, emotional, or behavioral health issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OEC commissioner</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Two providers of behavioral health services to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
children under age three and one parent or guardian whose child has received such services

| DDS commissioner | Two | A service provider to children with developmental disabilities and a parent or guardian of a child who has received such services |

The appointing authorities must make their appointments by July 31, 2019. The first appointees must serve a two-year term and subsequent appointees must serve a three-year term. Within 30 days of a vacancy, the appropriate appointing authority must fill the vacancy for the rest of the term.

The Children’s Committee chairpersons and the CWCS executive director or their designees are the committee’s chairpersons. They must schedule the first council meeting by August 30, 2019, and meet at least quarterly after that.

Under the bill, each member gets one vote and a majority of members (15) constitutes a quorum to transact business, exercise power, or perform any legally authorized or imposed duty.

**ANNUAL REPORT**

The annual report the committee provides to the Children’s Committee must include:

1. a description of the committee’s activities;

2. an evaluation of the efficacy of state child welfare policies and practices with respect to the committee’s goals; and

3. recommendations to improve such policies and practices.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Committee on Children

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 14  Nay 0  (03/12/2019)