

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3008
By: Pierson
Human Services
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In 1986 the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program was created to help older youth (age 16 and older) in the foster care system prepare for their departure from state care, a process commonly referred to as "aging-out." Texas foster youth who are "aging-out" of the foster care system face many challenges in their transition to adulthood. The PAL program provides beneficial information, training, and resources through programs such as money management or job skills training.

Even with the PAL program in place, many foster youth continue to have difficulty transitioning into independent living. This bill would create a pilot program which would match these aging-out youth with adult volunteer mentors in order to develop relationships of support and guidance in preparation for their transition to adult living.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner in section one of this bill.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3008 would amend the Family Code to require the Department of Family and Protective Services to contract with a private or nonprofit entity to pair foster care youth in Tarrant County, Denton County, Dallas County, and Collin County, who are 14 years of age to 18 years of age, with volunteer adult mentors. The private or nonprofit entity must have a demonstrated record of successfully providing services similar to those under the program.

Foster care children are authorized to participate on a voluntary basis and the adult mentors will be subject to state and national criminal background checks. Additionally, the department will require substitute care providers to facilitate participation of a child in the program. The substitute authorizes the executive commissioner to adopt rules for the administration of this program. The department is required to report to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the members of the legislature no later than January 1, 2011, on the activities conducted under the pilot program. The substitute provides that the report include the department's recommendations to improve the program and whether the program should be continued on a statewide basis.

Additionally, the substitute requires the department to contract with a public institution of higher education, that is located in the geographic area served by the pilot program, to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. The substitute requires the institution selected to report its findings to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the members of the legislature not later than January 1, 2011. The substitute provides that the report include an assessment of the effectiveness of the program, recommendations on improvements to the program, and whether the project should be continued on a statewide basis.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon passage, or, if the Act does not receive the necessary vote, the Act takes effect September 1, 2007.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL TO SUBSTITUTE

C.S.H.B. 3008 requires DFPS to contract with a private or nonprofit entity which has a demonstrated record of providing services similar to those under the program to implement the program. The substitute also lowers the age of participation to 14 years of age or older. The substitute removes the provision in the original which required foster parents or residential care providers to provide appropriate supervision over the mentors and adds the requirement of substitute care providers to facilitate participation of a child in the program.

The substitute modifies the original by requiring the department to report to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the members of the legislature no later than January 1, 2011, on the activities conducted under the pilot program. The substitute provides that the report include the department's recommendations to improve the program and whether the program should be continued on a statewide basis.

The substitute adds the requirement of the department to contract with a public institution of higher education located within the pilot program's geographic area to report to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the members of the legislature not later than January 1, 2011. The substitute provides that the report include an assessment of the effectiveness of the program and recommendations on improvements to the program, and whether the project should be continued on a statewide basis.

The substitute differs from the original in that Section 264.1165 of the Family Code in the substitute expires on September 1, 2011.