

Amend **HB 2170** by adding the following appropriately numbered SECTION to the bill and renumbering existing SECTIONS accordingly:

SECTION _____. Subchapter A, Chapter 263, Family Code, is amended by adding Section 263.007 to read as follows:

Sec. 263.007. FOSTER CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS. (a) In this section:

(1) "Agency foster group home," "agency foster home," "facility," "foster group home," and "foster home" have the meanings assigned by Section 42.002, Human Resources Code.

(2) "Foster care" means the placement of a child who is in the conservatorship of the department or an authorized agency and in care outside the child's home in an agency foster group home, agency foster home, foster group home, foster home, or another facility licensed or certified under Chapter 42, Human Resources Code, in which care is provided for 24 hours a day.

(3) "Foster children's bill of rights" means the rights described by Subsection (b).

(b) It is the policy of this state that each child in foster care be informed of the child's rights provided by state or federal law or policy that relate to:

(1) abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, and harassment;

(2) food, clothing, shelter, and education;

(3) medical, dental, vision, and mental health services, including the right of the child to consent to treatment;

(4) emergency behavioral intervention, including what methods are permitted, the conditions under which it may be used, and the precautions that must be taken when administering it;

(5) placement with the child's siblings and contact with members of the child's family;

(6) privacy and searches, including the use of storage space, mail, and the telephone;

(7) participation in school-related extracurricular or community activities;

(8) interaction with persons outside the foster care system, including teachers, church members, mentors, and friends;

(9) contact and communication with caseworkers,

attorneys ad litem, guardians ad litem, and court-appointed special advocates;

(10) religious services and activities;

(11) confidentiality of the child's records;

(12) job skills, personal finances, and preparation for adulthood;

(13) participation in a court hearing that involves the child;

(14) participation in the development of service and treatment plans;

(15) if the child has a disability, the advocacy and protection of the rights of a person with that disability; and

(16) any other matter affecting the child's ability to receive care and treatment in the least restrictive environment that is most like a family setting, consistent with the best interests and needs of the child.

(c) The department shall provide a written copy of the foster children's bill of rights to each child placed in foster care in the child's primary language, if possible, and shall inform the child of the rights described by the foster children's bill of rights:

(1) orally in the child's primary language, if possible, and in simple, nontechnical terms; or

(2) for a child who has a disability, including an impairment of vision or hearing, through any means that can reasonably be expected to result in successful communication with the child.

(d) A child placed in foster care may, at the child's option, sign a document acknowledging the child's understanding of the foster children's bill of rights after the department provides a written copy of the foster children's bill of rights to the child and informs the child of the rights described by the foster children's bill of rights in accordance with Subsection (c). If a child signs a document acknowledging the child's understanding of the foster children's bill of rights, the document must be placed in the child's case file.

(e) An agency foster group home, agency foster home, foster

group home, foster home, or other facility in which a child is placed in foster care shall provide a copy of the foster children's bill of rights to a child on the child's request. The foster children's bill of rights must be printed in English and in a second language.

(f) The department shall promote the participation of foster children and former foster children in educating other foster children about the foster children's bill of rights.

(g) The department shall develop and implement a policy for receiving and handling reports that the rights of a child in foster care are not being observed. The department shall inform a child in foster care and, if appropriate, the child's parent, managing conservator, or guardian of the method for filing a report with the department under this subsection.

(h) This section does not create a cause of action.