H.B. No. 2536

AN ACT

relating to neglect of a child and the grounds for termination of the parent-child relationship and possession of a child by the Department of Family and Protective Services.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Section 161.001(c), Family Code, is amended to read as follows:

(c)  A court may not make a finding under Subsection (b) and order termination of the parent-child relationship based on evidence that the parent:

(1)  homeschooled the child;

(2)  is economically disadvantaged;

(3)  has been charged with a nonviolent misdemeanor offense other than:

(A)  an offense under Title 5, Penal Code;

(B)  an offense under Title 6, Penal Code; or

(C)  an offense that involves family violence, as defined by Section 71.004 of this code;

(4)  provided or administered low-THC cannabis to a child for whom the low-THC cannabis was prescribed under Chapter 169, Occupations Code; [~~or~~]

(5)  declined immunization for the child for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief; or

(6)  sought an opinion from more than one medical provider relating to the child's medical care, transferred the child's medical care to a new medical provider, or transferred the child to another health care facility.

SECTION 2.  Section 261.001(4), Family Code, is amended to read as follows:

(4)  "Neglect":

(A)  includes:

(i)  the leaving of a child in a situation where the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of physical or mental harm, without arranging for necessary care for the child, and the demonstration of an intent not to return by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator of the child;

(ii)  the following acts or omissions by a person:

(a)  placing a child in or failing to remove a child from a situation that a reasonable person would realize requires judgment or actions beyond the child's level of maturity, physical condition, or mental abilities and that results in bodily injury or a substantial risk of immediate harm to the child;

(b)  failing to seek, obtain, or follow through with medical care for a child, with the failure resulting in or presenting a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or bodily injury or with the failure resulting in an observable and material impairment to the growth, development, or functioning of the child;

(c)  the failure to provide a child with food, clothing, or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services had been offered and refused;

(d)  placing a child in or failing to remove the child from a situation in which the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of sexual conduct harmful to the child; or

(e)  placing a child in or failing to remove the child from a situation in which the child would be exposed to acts or omissions that constitute abuse under Subdivision (1)(E), (F), (G), (H), or (K) committed against another child;

(iii)  the failure by the person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare to permit the child to return to the child's home without arranging for the necessary care for the child after the child has been absent from the home for any reason, including having been in residential placement or having run away; or

(iv)  a negligent act or omission by an employee, volunteer, or other individual working under the auspices of a facility or program, including failure to comply with an individual treatment plan, plan of care, or individualized service plan, that causes or may cause substantial emotional harm or physical injury to, or the death of, a child served by the facility or program as further described by rule or policy; and

(B)  does not include:

(i)  the refusal by a person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare to permit the child to remain in or return to the child's home resulting in the placement of the child in the conservatorship of the department if:

(a) [~~(i)~~]  the child has a severe emotional disturbance;

(b) [~~(ii)~~]  the person's refusal is based solely on the person's inability to obtain mental health services necessary to protect the safety and well-being of the child; and

(c) [~~(iii)~~]  the person has exhausted all reasonable means available to the person to obtain the mental health services described by Sub-subparagraph (b); or

(ii)  a decision by a person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare to:

(a)  obtain an opinion from more than one medical provider relating to the child's medical care;

(b)  transfer the child's medical care to a new medical provider; or

(c)  transfer the child to another health care facility [~~Subparagraph (ii)~~].

SECTION 3.  Section 262.116(a), Family Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a)  The Department of Family and Protective Services may not take possession of a child under this subchapter based on evidence that the parent:

(1)  homeschooled the child;

(2)  is economically disadvantaged;

(3)  has been charged with a nonviolent misdemeanor offense other than:

(A)  an offense under Title 5, Penal Code;

(B)  an offense under Title 6, Penal Code; or

(C)  an offense that involves family violence, as defined by Section 71.004 of this code;

(4)  provided or administered low-THC cannabis to a child for whom the low-THC cannabis was prescribed under Chapter 169, Occupations Code; [~~or~~]

(5)  declined immunization for the child for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief; or

(6)  sought an opinion from more than one medical provider relating to the child's medical care, transferred the child's medical care to a new medical provider, or transferred the child to another health care facility.

SECTION 4.  This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2021.

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    President of the Senate Speaker of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 2536 was passed by the House on April 13, 2021, by the following vote:  Yeas 148, Nays 0, 1 present, not voting.

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Chief Clerk of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 2536 was passed by the Senate on April 29, 2021, by the following vote:  Yeas 31, Nays 0.

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Secretary of the Senate

APPROVED:  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

                    Date

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                  Governor