

1 SJR78
2 175576-3
3 By Senators Figures, Albritton, Allen, Beasley, Blackwell,
4 Brewbaker, Bussman, Chambliss, Coleman-Madison, Dial, Dunn,
5 Glover, Hightower, Holley, Holtzclaw, Livingston, Marsh,
6 McClendon, Melson, Orr, Pittman, Reed, Ross, Sanders, Sanford,
7 Scofield, Shelnutt, Singleton, Smith, Smitherman, Stutts,
8 Waggoner, Ward, Whatley and Williams
9 RFD:
10 First Read: 05-APR-16

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8 CREATING THE ALABAMA TASK FORCE ON AT-RISK CHILDREN.

9
10 WHEREAS, the multiple problems of children engaged
11 in truant, delinquent, and at-risk behavior require the
12 attention and services of educators, service providers, and
13 citizens of the state; and

14 WHEREAS, a substantial number of children in the
15 community and in the juvenile and criminal justice systems
16 suffer from a mental illness and do not have access to
17 adequate community-based mental health services; and

18 WHEREAS, a substantial number of children in the
19 community and in the juvenile justice system are also in the
20 custody of the Department of Human Resources; and

21 WHEREAS, agencies and community-based organizations
22 that have jurisdiction over, or provide services to, children
23 who are engaged in truant, delinquent, and at-risk behavior
24 are in the best position to ensure educational and career
25 success for these children; and

26 WHEREAS, while the Juvenile Justice Act of 2008
27 provided great strides towards reducing the number of children

1 incarcerated for minor infractions and provided reforms that
2 more efficiently use the resources of the juvenile justice
3 system, there are remaining issues that children who engage in
4 truant, at-risk, and delinquent behavior face that affect this
5 population's opportunity for future success; and

6 WHEREAS, children and adolescents are in the process
7 of psychological development and, as a result, may engage in
8 negative behavior that requires correction with appropriate
9 services; and

10 WHEREAS, children have a unique propensity for
11 change with appropriate rehabilitative treatment and education
12 services; and

13 WHEREAS, harsh and overly punitive school discipline
14 practices can increase the probability that children enter the
15 juvenile and criminal justice systems; and

16 WHEREAS, whenever possible and considering the best
17 interest of the child and the community, children in the
18 juvenile and criminal justice systems should receive
19 community-based services; and

20 WHEREAS, the majority of children who engage in
21 serious negative behaviors are best served by community-based
22 programs or the juvenile justice system, rather than the adult
23 system; and

24 WHEREAS, children in the juvenile and criminal
25 justice systems require appropriate services, including
26 education and rehabilitation; and

1 WHEREAS, children and adolescents housed in
2 residential and secure facilities are entitled to education
3 and rehabilitative services and safe housing conditions; and

4 WHEREAS, children who are housed in adult facilities
5 are at increased risk for physical and sexual assault and are
6 more likely to commit suicide compared to juveniles housed in
7 juvenile facilities and children generally; and

8 WHEREAS, children exiting the juvenile and criminal
9 justice systems require specialized services to ensure that
10 their reentry into the community promotes positive outcomes;
11 and

12 WHEREAS, a detailed study of systems that can impact
13 children will provide complete information to guide the
14 development and implementation of programs beneficial to
15 children; now therefore,

16 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH
17 HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That there is created the Alabama
18 Task Force on At-Risk Children to be comprised of the
19 following members:

20 (1) The Executive Director of the Department of
21 Youth Services, or his or her designee, and one representative
22 appointed by the director.

23 (2) One representative of the Department of Human
24 Resources appointed by the commissioner of the department.

25 (3) One representative of the Department of Mental
26 Health appointed by the commissioner of the department.

1 (4) Two family court judges, one representing a
2 rural county and one representing an urban county appointed by
3 the Association of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

4 (5) One board certified mental health professional
5 with experience in providing services to children and
6 adolescents.

7 (6) One juvenile probation officer appointed by the
8 Administrative Office of Courts.

9 (7) One attorney licensed to practice in Alabama
10 with extensive experience in representing children in
11 delinquency proceedings appointed by the Office of Indigent
12 Defense Services.

13 (8) Two attorneys licensed to practice in Alabama
14 with extensive experience in policy and litigation on juvenile
15 justice and children's issues, with one appointed by the Board
16 of the Children's First Foundation and one appointed by the
17 Alabama Bar Association.

18 (9) One representative appointed by the Association
19 of the County Commissions of Alabama.

20 (10) One current or former school superintendent
21 appointed by the Alabama School Superintendents' Association.

22 (11) One representative of the Department of
23 Education appointed by the Superintendent of the Department of
24 Education.

25 (12) One representative of the Senate appointed by
26 the Senate President Pro Tempore.

1 (13) One representative of the House of
2 Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of
3 Representatives.

4 (14) The Commissioner of the Department of
5 Corrections or his or her designee.

6 (15) One member appointed by the Sheriffs'
7 Association.

8 (16) One representative of the Governor's office
9 appointed by the Governor.

10 (17) One representative of the House of
11 Representatives appointed by the Chair of the House Judiciary
12 Committee.

13 (18) One representative of the Senate appointed by
14 the Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

15 The Governor shall appoint the chair once all
16 appointments have been made to the task force.

17 All appointing authorities shall coordinate their
18 appointments so that diversity of gender, race, and
19 geographical areas are reflective of the makeup of the state,
20 as well as the diversity and demographics of the Alabama
21 prison population.

22 In collaboration with Alabama universities and
23 colleges, the task force shall seek to identify potential
24 legislative or administrative solutions to serve children
25 involved in the juvenile and criminal justice systems, and
26 strategies to reduce the number of children who become
27 involved in these systems.

1 In collaboration with Alabama universities and
2 colleges, the task force shall study a broad range of issues
3 related to children in the juvenile and criminal justice
4 systems, including, but not limited to, the appropriate
5 rehabilitative and education services for children involved in
6 the juvenile and criminal systems, aftercare services and
7 procedures for children reentering the community, community
8 and preventive mental health services to prevent children from
9 entering the juvenile and criminal justice systems, mental
10 health treatment for children with disabilities involved in
11 the juvenile and criminal justice systems, procedures for
12 addressing the needs of children in the custody of the
13 Department of Human Resources who are involved in the juvenile
14 and criminal justice systems, and preventive strategies to
15 reduce the number of children involved in the juvenile and
16 criminal justice systems. The task force shall report its
17 findings, conclusions, and recommendations for proposed
18 legislation to the Legislature no later than the fifteenth day
19 of the 2017 Regular Session.

20 Each nonlegislative member of the task force may be
21 reimbursed for expenses related to attending meetings
22 consistent with policies of the various appointing
23 authorities.

24 Upon the request of the chair, the Secretary of the
25 Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives shall
26 provide necessary clerical assistance for the work of the task
27 force. Each legislative member of the task force shall be

1 entitled to his or her regular legislative compensation, per
2 diem, and travel expenses for each day he or she attends a
3 meeting of the task force in accordance with Amendment 871 of
4 the Constitution of Alabama of 1901. These payments shall be
5 paid out of any funds appropriated to the use of the
6 Legislature.