

1 HR7  
2 203985-2  
3 By Representative Weaver  
4 RFD: Rules  
5 First Read: 04-FEB-20

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8 ENCOURAGING PERMANENCY FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE  
9 IN ALABAMA.

10  
11 WHEREAS, An ongoing focus on strengthening families  
12 through primary prevention initiatives and family first  
13 services aims to prevent the need for foster care in the first  
14 place; and

15 WHEREAS, Every child who is in foster care deserves  
16 the security and opportunity for growth that a permanent  
17 family can provide; and

18 WHEREAS, A child's success is best supported in a  
19 system that is family-focused, child-centered, and  
20 community-based; and

21 WHEREAS, The goal of child welfare for children who  
22 are unable to be safely reunified with their parents is to  
23 ensure they are eligible for adoption and are placed in safe,  
24 loving, permanent homes; and

25 WHEREAS, There are approximately 443,000 foster  
26 children in foster care in the United States; and

1           WHEREAS, Nationally, 71,000 foster children can be  
2 described as "legal orphans" because parental rights have been  
3 terminated; and

4           WHEREAS, Approximately 50,000 to 65,000 American  
5 children are adopted each year from foster care, but many  
6 other children who have a plan and a desire for adoption  
7 linger in the foster system for about an average of three  
8 years waiting to be adopted since their parental rights were  
9 terminated; and

10          WHEREAS, In the United States, currently there are  
11 approximately 13,846 children ages 15 to 17 with a goal of  
12 adoption, but only 2,935 children in that age range were  
13 adopted in 2018; and

14          WHEREAS, Older children wait twice as long for a  
15 permanent home compared to children under age 14, and they  
16 often "age out" of the foster system; and

17          WHEREAS, Annually, approximately 20,000 American  
18 youth exit foster care to become emancipated, only to face  
19 life on their own without mentoring or the support of a  
20 permanent family; and

21          WHEREAS, In Alabama, there are approximately 6,400  
22 children who are in custody of the Department of Human  
23 Resources; and

24          WHEREAS, Of those children in Alabama available for  
25 adoption, safe and loving permanent parents and families are  
26 needed each year; and

1           WHEREAS, Nationwide, recruiting and retaining  
2 high-quality caseworkers is paramount in responding to child  
3 welfare situations; with the average child welfare worker case  
4 load currently exceeding 30 children, burnout among  
5 caseworkers can ultimately make placing foster children even  
6 more difficult; and

7           WHEREAS, Children with a plan for adoption may be  
8 living in a variety of out-of-home placement settings,  
9 including foster care homes, kinship care homes, specialized  
10 group facilities, and residential care facilities with the  
11 well-being of the child kept at the forefront of placement;  
12 and

13           WHEREAS, Children in out-of-home placement range in  
14 age from infants to young adults under 21 years of age; and

15           WHEREAS, Finding adoptive families is hardest for  
16 those children who are older, have a special need, or are in a  
17 sibling group; and

18           WHEREAS, The federal Title IV-E agency is working  
19 with states to increase adoption rates and improve timelines  
20 for these children by collaborating with public child welfare  
21 agencies and stakeholders to match young people and families;  
22 and

23           WHEREAS, Public child welfare caseworkers are on the  
24 front lines of ensuring the safety of children in the public,  
25 exercise their roles in expediting permanency of foster  
26 children and call upon probate courts to examine their roles

1 and timeframes so that foster children may permanently be come  
2 part of safe, loving families; and

3 WHEREAS, We call upon the family courts to examine  
4 their role in expediting adoptions of children with terminated  
5 parental rights who are with a safe, loving family that is  
6 willing to adopt them, pending a permanency hearing; and

7 WHEREAS, Through the partnerships among foster,  
8 adoptive, and kinship parents, child welfare staff, and public  
9 and private child-serving organizations, efforts can be made  
10 to ensure that children are safe and their voices are heard to  
11 advance the success of every child; and

12 WHEREAS, Permanency for children who want to be  
13 adopted brings them certainty and security and allows them to  
14 grow with their adopted family; now therefore,

15 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF  
16 THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, That we recognize that improvement  
17 of adoption rates and shortening timelines, including for  
18 children with adoption plans that have not been made  
19 permanent, those who are aging out of foster care, and young  
20 people with special needs, is of vital importance to the State  
21 of Alabama.