

SJR79 ENROLLED



1 SJR79

2 6Y9TH1Z-2

3 By Senators Coleman, Gudger, Allen, Woods, Beasley,
4 Smitherman, Livingston, Singleton, Kelley, Figures, Waggoner,
5 Kitchens, Williams, Chesteen, Jones, Barfoot, Coleman-Madison

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7 RFD: Rules

8 First Read: 11-Mar-26



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1 Enrolled, An Act,

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4 SJR___ ESTABLISHING THE ALABAMA LEGISLATIVE STUDY COMMISSION
5 ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE LAWS AND POLICIES.

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7 WHEREAS, child sexual abuse in all forms is a serious
8 criminal offense and a profound violation of the physical,
9 emotional, and psychological well-being of children of all
10 ages; and

11 WHEREAS, protecting all children from sexual abuse
12 and exploitation, regardless of age, gender, disability,
13 family circumstance, placement status, or other
14 vulnerability, is a fundamental responsibility of the State
15 of Alabama; and

16 WHEREAS, acts of child sexual abuse occur across a
17 wide range of relationships and settings, including within
18 families and households, institutional and organizational
19 environments, custodial or state care settings, and through
20 positions of trust or authority charged with the care,
21 supervision, or education of children; and

22 WHEREAS, child sexual abuse also occurs through
23 peer-on-peer conduct, commercial sexual exploitation, sexual
24 trafficking, online-facilitated exploitation, and the
25 creation or distribution of child sexual abuse material; and

26 WHEREAS, children with disabilities and other
27 heightened vulnerabilities may face increased risk of sexual
28 abuse and additional barriers to disclosure, protection, and



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29 recovery; and

30 WHEREAS, Alabama law addresses child sexual abuse
31 through criminal statutes, civil causes of action, mandatory
32 reporting requirements, and child welfare policies; however,
33 these laws have developed over time through separate
34 enactments and may operate inconsistently or incompletely
35 when viewed as a whole; and

36 WHEREAS, criminal penalties for child sexual abuse
37 are intended to punish offenders and deter future offenses,
38 yet practical barriers may exist that affect the
39 investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of these
40 crimes, including delayed disclosure by victims, evidentiary
41 challenges unique to offenses against children, and
42 complexities associated with digital or exploitation based
43 offenses; and

44 WHEREAS, civil law provides mechanisms for
45 accountability and compensation for harm suffered by
46 victims; however, statutory limitation periods, procedural
47 requirements, and defenses available under existing law may
48 limit access to civil remedies, particularly where abuse is
49 not disclosed until adulthood or involves institutional or
50 exploitation-based conduct; and

51 WHEREAS, under existing Alabama law, avenues for
52 civil accountability in cases of child sexual abuse may be
53 limited in certain circumstances, particularly with respect
54 to entities or institutions that employ, supervise, or
55 exercise authority over individuals who commit abuse; and

56 WHEREAS, limitations within current civil liability



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57 frameworks may have the effect of insulating negligent or
58 enabling conduct from full civil accountability and may
59 reduce incentives for prevention, reporting, and
60 institutional safeguards; and

61 WHEREAS, Alabama's statutes of limitations applicable
62 to civil claims arising from child sexual abuse are
63 comparatively restrictive and may bar survivors from seeking
64 redress after the passage of a limited filing period,
65 regardless of the nature or severity of the abuse or the age
66 at which disclosure occurs; and

67 WHEREAS, when perpetrators and enabling environments
68 are not subject to meaningful accountability, individuals
69 who commit child sexual abuse may be able to avoid detection
70 or consequences by moving between positions, organizations,
71 or jurisdictions; and

72 WHEREAS, strengthening accountability for both
73 perpetrators and enabling conditions is essential to
74 protecting children, supporting survivors, and preventing
75 Alabama from becoming a place of refuge for individuals
76 seeking to evade responsibility for child sexual abuse; and

77 WHEREAS, efforts to improve accountability mechanisms
78 are intended to protect children and responsible
79 institutions alike by promoting clear standards, prevention,
80 transparency, and public trust; and

81 WHEREAS, children who experience sexual abuse often
82 do not immediately report the abuse due to fear,
83 manipulation, threats, shame, lack of understanding, loyalty
84 to the abuser, developmental factors, or the involvement of



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85 trusted adults or institutions, and delayed disclosure is a
86 well-documented and common outcome of such trauma; and

87 WHEREAS, as a result of delayed disclosure, statutes
88 of limitations and related doctrines may have the effect of
89 barring otherwise meritorious claims before victims are able
90 to understand, process, or report the abuse they suffered;
91 and

92 WHEREAS, certain legal doctrines and statutory
93 frameworks may provide protections or immunities to
94 institutions or entities that employ, supervise, or
95 otherwise exercise authority over individuals who commit
96 acts of child sexual abuse, which may have the unintended
97 consequence of reducing institutional accountability; and

98 WHEREAS, a lack of clear or consistent accountability
99 mechanisms may allow patterns of abuse to go undetected,
100 unreported, or unaddressed across family, institutional,
101 custodial, online, or exploitation contexts, thereby
102 enabling continued harm to children; and

103 WHEREAS, survivors of child sexual abuse often
104 experience long-term and lifelong consequences, including,
105 but not limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder,
106 depression, anxiety, substance abuse, difficulty forming
107 relationships, impaired educational or employment outcomes,
108 and increased risk of future victimization; and

109 WHEREAS, the long-term effects of child sexual abuse
110 extend beyond individual victims and families and impose
111 significant social costs, including impacts on public health
112 systems, mental health services, the criminal justice



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113 system, and workforce participation; and

114 WHEREAS, effective prevention, detection, and
115 response to all forms of child sexual abuse require
116 coordination among law enforcement, prosecutors, child
117 welfare agencies, schools, health care providers, child
118 advocacy centers, technology platforms, and community
119 organizations; and

120 WHEREAS, other states have undertaken comprehensive
121 legislative reviews of their criminal and civil laws
122 relating to child sexual abuse, including statutes of
123 limitations, reporting requirements, institutional
124 responsibility, exploitation offenses, and victim support
125 systems, in order to evaluate whether existing laws
126 adequately protect children and serve the public interest;
127 and

128 WHEREAS, this body recognizes the importance of
129 examining Alabama's current legal framework in a deliberate
130 and thorough manner to better understand how criminal
131 penalties, civil remedies, reporting laws, institutional
132 responsibilities, and exploitation-related offenses operate
133 collectively in practice; and

134 WHEREAS, a legislative study commission provides an
135 appropriate forum to gather information, receive testimony,
136 review data, compare approaches adopted in other states, and
137 identify potential gaps or unintended consequences within
138 existing law across all forms and contexts of child sexual
139 abuse; now therefore,



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140 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH
141 HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That there is established the
142 Alabama Legislative Study Commission on Child Sexual Abuse
143 Laws and Policies.

144 (a) The commission shall consist of the following
145 members:

146 (1) Two members of the Senate appointed by the
147 President Pro Tempore of the Senate, one of whom shall serve
148 as cochair.

149 (2) One member of the Senate appointed by the
150 minority leader.

151 (3) Two members of the House of Representatives
152 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives,
153 one of whom shall serve as cochair.

154 (4) One member of the House of Representatives
155 appointed by the minority leader.

156 (5) The Attorney General, or his or her designee.

157 (6) The Director of the Department of Human
158 Resources, or his or her designee.

159 (7) The Commissioner of the Department of Public
160 Health, or his or her designee.

161 (8) The Administrative Director of Courts, or his or
162 her designee.

163 (9) One district attorney appointed by the Alabama
164 District Attorneys Association.

165 (10) One representative of a statewide law
166 enforcement association appointed by the Governor.



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167 (11) One representative of a child advocacy
168 organization appointed by the Governor.

169 (12) One licensed mental health professional with
170 experience treating survivors of child sexual abuse
171 appointed by the Governor.

172 (13) One attorney with experience representing
173 survivors of child sexual abuse in civil matters appointed
174 by the Governor.

175 (14) One survivor of child sexual abuse.

176 (15) One survivor advocate appointed by the Governor.

177 (16) One individual from the state at large appointed
178 by the Lieutenant Governor.

179 (b) An individual who has been investigated or
180 convicted of child sexual abuse, or an individual who is
181 employed by a person who has been investigated or convicted
182 of child sexual abuse, shall not be eligible to be appointed
183 as a member of the commission.

184 (c) (1) Appointments shall be made within 30 days
185 after the effective date of this resolution.

186 (2) The commission shall hold its initial meeting on
187 the call of the cochairs within 45 days after the final
188 appointment is made.

189 (3) A majority of the members shall constitute a
190 quorum for the transaction of business.

191 (4) Meetings of the commission shall be conducted in
192 accordance with the Alabama Open Meetings Act, Chapter 25A
193 of Title 36, Code of Alabama 1975. All meetings shall be
194 open to the public and notice shall be provided as required



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195 by law. Meetings may be conducted in person, by video
196 conference, or in a hybrid format. The requirement that
197 meetings be open to the public shall be satisfied if members
198 of the public are provided contemporaneous access to observe
199 the proceedings through physical attendance or live
200 electronic means, including video stream or publicly
201 accessible video conference.

202 (5) No member of the commission may participate in
203 deliberations or recommendations concerning a matter in
204 which the member has a direct financial interest.

205 (6) The commission shall meet at the call of the
206 chairs, but shall meet no fewer than five times.

207 (d) The commission shall study and evaluate Alabama's
208 criminal and civil laws, policies, and practices relating to
209 child sexual abuse in all forms and contexts, including the
210 following:

211 (1) Sexual abuse of a child within a family or
212 household environment.

213 (2) Sexual abuse of a child in institutional or
214 organizational settings, including schools, religious
215 organizations, youth-serving organizations, athletic
216 programs, and similar entities.

217 (3) Sexual abuse of a child by a person in a position
218 of trust or authority, including educators, clergy, coaches,
219 caregivers, foster parents, medical providers, and other
220 adults entrusted with the care or supervision of children.

221 (4) Child-on-child sexual abuse.

222 (5) Sexual trafficking of a child.



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223 (6) Commercial sexual exploitation of children,
224 including the exchange of sexual activity for money, goods,
225 services, shelter, or other things of value.

226 (7) Online-facilitated child sexual abuse and
227 exploitation, including grooming, coercion, sextortion,
228 luring, and exploitation through digital or social media
229 platforms.

230 (8) The production, possession, or distribution of
231 child sexual abuse material.

232 (9) Sexual abuse of children in custodial or state
233 care settings, including foster care, juvenile justice
234 facilities, detention, residential treatment, and group
235 homes.

236 (10) Sexual abuse of children with disabilities or
237 other heightened vulnerabilities.

238 (11) Criminal statutes, penalties, and procedural
239 provisions.

240 (12) Civil causes of action, statutes of limitations,
241 and institutional liability standards.

242 (13) Mandatory reporting laws and compliance
243 mechanisms.

244 (14) Institutional responsibilities and
245 accountability frameworks.

246 (15) Access to victim services, mental health care,
247 and survivor support systems.

248 (16) Barriers to investigation, prosecution, civil
249 recovery, and victim support.

250 (17) Comparative approaches adopted in other states.



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251 (18) Any other matter the commission deems relevant
252 to protecting children and supporting survivors.

253 (e) The commission shall submit a written report of
254 its findings and recommendations and shall present any
255 proposed legislation to the Governor, the President Pro
256 Tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
257 Representatives no later than November 1, 2026. Upon filing
258 its report with the Legislature, the study commission shall
259 stand dissolved and discharged of any future duties and
260 responsibilities.

261 (f) The Legislative Services Agency shall provide
262 administrative and clerical support to the commission. State
263 agencies shall cooperate with and provide information
264 requested by the commission to the extent permitted by law.

265 (g) Legislative members shall be entitled to their
266 regular legislative compensation and travel reimbursement
267 for attending meetings of the commission in accordance with
268 applicable law. Nonlegislative members shall serve without
269 compensation but may be reimbursed for reasonable and
270 necessary expenses from funds available to the commission,
271 subject to applicable state travel policies.

272 (h) Pursuant to Section 36-14-17.1, Code of Alabama
273 1975, the study commission shall provide to the Secretary of
274 State a notice of all meetings, the name of each member
275 serving on the study commission, and a copy of the final
276 report and other documents produced throughout the duration
277 of the study commission.



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President and Presiding Officer of the Senate

Speaker of the House of Representatives

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Senate 11-Mar-26

I hereby certify that the within Act originated in and passed the Senate.

Patrick Harris,
Secretary.

House of Representatives

Passed: 01-Apr-26

By: Senator Coleman