



Center for Public Policy Priorities

CALL TO ACTION FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Strengthening child protection is critically important. This call to action advises you about what is happening and what you can do to make your voice heard.

The substantive legislation is Senate Bill 6, which the Senate passed on March 3. Below is a link to the legislation. To read what the Senate has done, read the engrossed version. Senate Bill 6 was referred to the House Human Services Committee, which made various changes and then reported it favorably to the House. To read what the House Human Services Committee has done, read the House Committee Report. The House has calendared SB 6 for consideration on the emergency calendar on Tuesday, April 19, though the House can postpone action. Here is a link to the legislation:

<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/cgi-bin/db2www/tlo/billhist/billhist.d2w/report?LEG=79&SESS=R&CHAMBER=S&BILLTYPE=B&BILLSUFFIX=00006&SORT=Asc>

CPPP has prepared a side by side, which is merely a guide to locating differences between the House and Senate bills as of April 15. We do not analyze any of the Adult Protective Services provisions in the bill. We also have not yet evaluated the differences in the CPS provisions, so the side by side does not take a position on which version is preferable. Here is a link to the side by side: <http://www.cppp.org/files/4/CPS.pdf>.

There is one difference, however, on which we have taken a position. Both the Senate version and the House Committee version propose to “privatize” substitute care. While we have concerns about the speed and the transition, we do not oppose this step. The House Committee version, however, goes a step further and proposes to “privatize” case management, meaning that private companies would handle the case oversight and the legal work now handled by state caseworkers. Moreover, the House Committee version mandates that HHSC privatize case management on a schedule that is unrealistic. We have serious reservations about giving private companies this important role. For example, we are concerned about private companies prosecuting child abuse cases in the name of the state. The Senate has proposed to pilot the privatization of case management, which CPPP supports. Piloting a radical new concept makes sense; indeed, no one has offered any good argument against a pilot.

Here are links to our two policy briefs on CPS privatization:

Privatization of Child Protective Services

http://www.cppp.org/files/4/privatization_pb.pdf

Is the Legislature Going to Make Things Worse for Texas Families?

<http://www.cppp.org/files/4/Privatization%20Policy%20Brief3.pdf>

Going back to the side by side, the cost amounts shown in the House and Senate proposal columns are for General Revenue only, which brings us to the subject of money. There are two different pots of money needed. First, there is the pot of money needed to fund Senate Bill 6. Second, there is the pot of money needed to fund the investigative staff increases called for in the HHSC reform plan. Both the Senate and House fund their respective versions of Senate Bill 6. The Senate, however, has not yet agreed to spend the money to fully fund the staff increases called for in the HHSC reform plan. We have been assured that the Senate intends to do, but as of yet, it has not done so.

Which brings us to our call to action:

1. We urge you to contact your representative by Tuesday morning, April 19, and ask them to support a floor amendment to pilot the privatization of case management like the Senate or to at least give the state more time to implement case management privatization.
2. We urge you in the next week to remind the budget conferees and the Lt. Governor and Speaker to fully fund the staff increases called for in the HHSC CPS reform plan.

You can find your representative and senator at this link:

<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/fyi/fyi.htm>

The budget conferees are:

Senate Conferees: Ogden, Chair | Averitt | Duncan | Whitmire | Zaffirini

House Conferees: Pitts, Chair | Gattis | Kolkhorst | Luna | Turner

Addresses, phone and fax numbers, and e-mails are available at this link:

<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>

Hearing from you does make a difference. Personal visits and personal letters have the most impact.