



## SENATOR CHARLES SCHWERTNER, MD

SENATE DISTRICT 5

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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February 22, 2017

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### **Major CPS Reform Clears Senate Committee, Heads to Floor**

*Senate Committee on Health & Human Services gives unanimous approval to SB 11, Chairman Schwertner says he expects to the bill to pass the Senate early next week.*

**AUSTIN, TX** -- This morning, the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services offered a unanimous and bipartisan show of support for Senate Bill 11, legislation that would reform the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and address a number of structural problems with how the state currently manages its child protection efforts.

"Today's vote was an important first step in improving the lives of our state's foster children and ensuring that all children in Texas are kept safe from abuse and neglect," said Health and Human Services Chairman, and author of SB 11, Dr. Charles Schwertner, MD (R-Georgetown). "I'm thankful to the members of the Health and Human Services Committee for their support and I look forward to passing this bill on the floor of the Texas Senate early next week."

In December, Senator Schwertner filed SB 11 and called on Governor Greg Abbott to designate it an emergency agenda item, a process that allows lawmakers to act upon legislation within the first 60 days of the session. In his State of the State address this month, Governor Abbott named issues related to child protection issues as one of his four emergency items.

"This isn't a Republican issue or a Democratic issue, it's a Texas issue," added Senator Kirk Watson (D-Austin), one of the co-authors of SB 11. "Every legislator in this building understands how important it is to fix the gaps in our foster care system and I hope we continue to see a united effort to protect the children of Texas. This is progress. I am happy to work with Senator Schwertner on this important issue."

The main provisions of CSSB 11 are outlined below:

#### **Ensures timely and appropriate services for children in foster care.**

- Requires all children to receive a medical examination within 3 days of entering care.
- Requires Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) and STAR Health to ensure that children receive a comprehensive assessment within their first 30 days in foster care.
- Establishes a regional pilot program for a non-profit organization to provide comprehensive case management services for foster children with the most acute medical and behavioral health needs.

#### **Increases the capacity of the foster care system by encouraging collaboration and enhancing Foster Care Redesign.**

- Requires local CPS leadership to analyze DFPS data on capacity needs and work with foster care providers, faith-based communities, and advocate groups to develop comprehensive plans for increasing foster care capacity.

(over)

**Increases the capacity of the foster care system by encouraging collaboration and enhancing Foster Care Redesign (continued)**

- Requires all future Foster Care Redesign contractors to be non-profit or governmental entities with a mission related to child welfare.
- Requires the development of a comprehensive readiness review prior to expanding Foster Care Redesign to new catchment areas, including assessment of a vendor's ability to provide case management and evidence-based services to children and families, as well as their ability to ensure sufficient foster care capacity.

**Increases accountability for providers serving children in the CPS system.**

- Implements a regional pilot program in two areas of the state that enlist a non-profit vendor to assume responsibility for the provision of Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS) and case management for children and families.
- Directs DFPS to work with outside groups to develop a series of quality metrics for both FBSS and post-adoptive services for inclusion in future provider contracts.
- Creates the Foster Care Oversight and Quality Assurance Division within DFPS to manage contract compliance and oversee performance outcomes for all foster care contractors responsible for providing services to children and families.
- Expands the current performance-based contracting program to include all foster care providers and directs DFPS to implement a system of financial incentives for meeting or exceeding established benchmarks, as well as penalties for substandard performance.

**Strengthens the standards for investigating abuse or neglect of children in foster care and moves these investigations to the CPS Investigations Division.**

- Moves investigations of child abuse and neglect that occur at residential child care facilities such as foster homes, residential treatment centers, and foster group homes to the CPS Investigations division and ensures that all investigations are held to a high standard. This includes 24-hour and 72-hour requirements for initial face-to-face contact with victims as opposed to the current 5-day standard.

A medical doctor by training, Dr. Schwertner serves as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. Schwertner is currently serving his third term as the senator for Senate District 5, a ten-county region of central and east Texas.

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