

HOUSE MEMORIAL 39

51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2014

INTRODUCED BY

Bill McCamley

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR AND THE STATE PERSONNEL OFFICE TO INVESTIGATE AND ASSIST THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT IN INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS PROTECTIVE SERVICES DIVISION BY INCREASING STAFF LEVELS.

WHEREAS, in 2011, the legislative finance committee presented the children, youth and families department with a protective services evaluation documenting numerous possible problems in the department, including the statement that "... worker turnover, inefficient management structures, duplication of efforts, and other systemic issues have contributed to chronic case overloads that compromise child safety."; and

WHEREAS, even though the legislature has continued to fund these services, the children, youth and families department shows that almost four million dollars (\$4,000,000) per year

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1 has been reverted from its protective services division for
2 fiscal year 2012 and fiscal year 2013; and

3 WHEREAS, the child welfare league of America recommends
4 that no more than twelve active cases per month be assigned to
5 a social worker, while social workers in the protective
6 services division average almost twenty-two active cases per
7 social worker, according to children, youth and families
8 department estimates; and

9 WHEREAS, staffing level vacancies for the protective
10 services division have remained unacceptably high, with the
11 legislative finance committee reporting these vacancy levels to
12 be consistently at thirteen percent to fifteen percent; and

13 WHEREAS, the services provided by the protective services
14 division, in protecting the most vulnerable children in the
15 state, are consistently documented as some of the most
16 difficult services to provide, with Governor Susana Martinez
17 stating to the *Albuquerque Journal* that the agency "has had a
18 'revolving door', due largely to employee burnout and the
19 difficult nature of the job"; and

20 WHEREAS, independent reports show that since 2011, one in
21 four cases referred for investigation to the children, youth
22 and families department results in a child waiting more than
23 thirty days for a result; reports of neglect and abuse have
24 risen twenty-seven percent since 2011, with an increase of one
25 thousand cases from 2012 to 2013; and more children were

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1 subject to abuse after a previous investigation in 2013 than in
2 2012; and

3 WHEREAS, it is the role of the New Mexico legislature to
4 provide accountability on behalf of its constituents; and

5 WHEREAS, the trend of problems with children continuing to
6 increase, combined with a decrease in resources used by the
7 children, youth and families department, is extremely
8 concerning;

9 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
10 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the office of
11 the state auditor be requested to:

12 A. evaluate that all federal, state and agency
13 regulations are being adhered to by the children, youth and
14 families department;

15 B. obtain specific information on the amount of
16 funding reverted from the protective services division; and

17 C. conduct a performance audit to determine what
18 practices recommended by the legislative finance committee have
19 been adopted; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the results of the audit be
21 presented to the appropriate interim legislative committee by
22 December 2014; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the state personnel office be
24 requested to assist the children, youth and families department
25 in any possible manner to decrease caseloads and turnover by

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1 increasing, and then stabilizing, employment within the
2 protective services division, with recommendations to the
3 legislature on how to accomplish these goals; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
5 transmitted to the office of the state auditor, the secretary
6 of children, youth and families, the director of the state
7 personnel office, the legislative health and human services
8 committee and the legislative finance committee.

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