

AMERICAN CHILDREN'S CAMPAIGN

2022 Bill Highlights

As of 4/4/2022

HB 7065 – Child Welfare

Sponsors: House Children, Families & Seniors Subcommittee

Outcome: HB 7065 is enrolled.

Target Population: Students who have aged out of the foster care system, youth experiencing homelessness, fathers, and male-at-risk students

Summary: HB 7065 establishes guidelines for children who are involved in both the foster care system and the juvenile justice system. Requires these agencies to create a joint quarterly report that they must submit to the legislature. Requires community based care organizations to help students create a transition plan to college that includes independent living information tailored to each student, financial advantages of each program and a document to be signed by the student. Requires the Department of Children and Families to assess a young adult's financial literacy, executive functioning skills and



self-regulation skills before they attend college. Also requires DCF to help students create and manage a financial plan that will be updated periodically, until funding from the Department is no longer given to the student. Expands tuition and fees exemptions for students in college to include homeless students, and students who have aged out of the foster care system. Establishes a liaison for these students at every post secondary institution funded by the state. Changes the amount of monthly stipend a young adult receives from the state from \$1,256 to \$1,720. Requires the Department of Health to create a fatherhood engagement initiative that will allow fathers to obtain information that will motivate him to enhance his abilities as a father. Establishes that DCF will award grants to non-profit organizations that focus on helping fathers find employment, manage child support, transition from incarceration, access healthcare, and enhance parenting skills. Requires the department to provide grants to nonprofit organizations that mentor at-risk male students. Establishes the Children's Initiative Community plan and requires community based care organizations to hire father engagement specialists. Establishes the month of June as the "Responsible Fatherhood Month."

Impact: 8.4 million children in the U.S. live without a biological father, step-father, or adoptive father, which equates to 1 in 4. Statistically, a child is two times more likely to drop out of high school, four times more likely to live in poverty, and seven times more likely to become pregnant as a teen if they do not have a father figure in their life. 85% of youth in prison are from fatherless families.

Family structure and stability have a significant impact on the overall well-being of children, including cognitive and behavioral development and better health outcomes. Investing resources into supporting families and teaching them how to better care for their children will ultimately help them protect their children from adverse childhood experiences. Locating absent fathers early in the dependency process will also allow children to move to permanency more quickly.



Provisions from HB 7065 will also create liaisons in secondary institutions for students experiencing homelessness or who have aged out of the foster care system and expand fee exemptions. A total of 79,781 youth in Florida experienced homelessness during the 2019-2020 school year and the number of homeless students in Florida has tripled over the past decade. Homeless students have the lowest graduation rates and standardized test scores compared to students with reliable housing. On average, homeless students will miss 15 days of school a year and 8% take a leave of absence without notice, almost three times more than other students. Youth experiencing homelessness face additional barriers in college, including food insecurity, weak family support, and lack of awareness of available financial resources.

Post-secondary enrollment can provide opportunities for youth to break away from homelessness and food insecurity, resulting in better, brighter futures for Florida's children. American Children's Campaign supports eliminating barriers to tuition exemptions and meal plan vouchers for youth in secondary education programs, improving access to reliable transportation and vital documents for employment, removing barriers to quickly getting children in dependency cases to permanency, investments in affordable housing, and continued support and collaborations between Florida's systems of care serving homeless youth.

Effective Date: July 1st, 2022

