

House Resolution 584

By: Representatives Thomas of the 39th, Abrams of the 89th, Pezold of the 133rd, Peake of the 141st, Cantrell of the 22nd, and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Commending the dedication and hard work of Georgia's child welfare workers and foster
2 parents and recognizing May 31, 2015, as Foster Kid's Day in Georgia; and for other
3 purposes.

4 WHEREAS, this body recognizes that the youth of this state and nation are our most precious
5 resource and hope for the future, and all children need a safe, loving, and nurturing home to
6 reach their full potential; and

7 WHEREAS, foster care is an essential component of modern society and a practical means
8 of providing children in need with a safe, supportive, and temporary environment; and

9 WHEREAS, the citizens of the State of Georgia are known for their compassion and have
10 a long-standing tradition of opening their hearts and homes to children in need of a stable
11 environment; and

12 WHEREAS, there are more than 9,500 children in foster care in Georgia, and these children
13 are of all ages and races, come from a variety of backgrounds and situations, and are victims
14 of abuse and neglect; and

15 WHEREAS, in 2014, the most common reasons children entered the Division of Family and
16 Children Services custody were neglect, drug abuse, inadequate housing, abandonment,
17 incarceration, physical abuse, and caretaker inability; and

18 WHEREAS, many of these foster children suffer from the added trauma of being removed
19 from their communities and schools due to a lack of foster homes in their area, a problem that
20 is particularly prevalent in the northern regions of this state; and

21 WHEREAS, the state has stepped into the role of parent in these cases and has the statutory
22 obligation to provide foster children with food, clothing, shelter, education, and medical care,

23 and the details of how the state must fulfill its obligation are enumerated in a complex
24 combination of state and federal statutes, court decisions, state regulations, agency policies,
25 and local practices; and

26 WHEREAS, the foster children who are most in need of homes are those with special needs,
27 including teenagers, siblings, and children with physical, emotional, or behavioral
28 disabilities; and

29 WHEREAS, the Division of Family and Children Services strives to find loving, safe, and
30 stable homes for the children who are brought into foster care and works to locate relatives
31 to support the birth family in reunification efforts or who are willing to let the child stay with
32 them while the birth family works with the agency on reunification; and

33 WHEREAS, the permanent outcomes for children in foster care are decided on a
34 case-by-case basis and include reunification, adoption, and permanent guardianship; and

35 WHEREAS, the individuals who commit their professional lives and careers to serving foster
36 children are dedicated to helping these children reach their full potential despite the
37 challenges they have faced; and

38 WHEREAS, devoted foster parents throughout Georgia make every effort to improve the
39 quality of life of children in their care, and it is important to recognize their valuable
40 contributions and continuing love and support; and

41 WHEREAS, the average turnover rate for Georgia's child welfare workers is 35 percent, and
42 in metro area counties nearly 50 percent, because case managers with an average salary of
43 \$28,000.00 are easily able to find better pay, more predictable hours, and lower-risk
44 employment in the private sector; and

45 WHEREAS, despite the transition of 913 children from state custody into adoptive families
46 in 2014, the foster care system faces many challenges, including finding mentors to guide
47 foster children into adulthood and the danger of teenagers aging out of the system without
48 finding loving homes; and

49 WHEREAS, there remains a need for capable foster parents, and adults interested in helping
50 a child in need are encouraged to learn more about becoming foster parents by contacting
51 their local department of social services or foster care agencies.

52 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
53 the members of this body commend the dedication and hard work of Georgia's child welfare
54 workers and foster parents and recognize May 31, 2015, as Foster Kid's Day in Georgia.

55 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
56 and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the
57 Georgia Division of Family and Children Services.