

2024 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 305

BY REPRESENTATIVE EDMONSTON

CHILDREN/DCFS: Directs the Partners in Protecting Children Subcommittee of the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board to study the needs of the child welfare system in this state

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To direct the Partners in Protecting Children Subcommittee of the Children's Cabinet  
3 Advisory Board to study the needs of the child welfare system in this state.

4 WHEREAS, in August 2022, two-year-old Mitchell Robinson, III, died from a  
5 fentanyl overdose in Baton Rouge; and

6 WHEREAS, according to a report from the office of the state inspector general, in  
7 the weeks before Mitchell's death, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)  
8 received three reports from his healthcare providers warning that he had clinically responded  
9 to Narcan, indicating an opioid overdose, and asking DCFS to intervene; and

10 WHEREAS, according to the report, caseworkers never made face-to-face contact  
11 with the family or made any effort to remove him from their care prior to Mitchell's death;  
12 and

13 WHEREAS, according to the report, Mitchell died approximately a week after the  
14 final warning to DCFS according to a pending court case; and

15 WHEREAS, sixteen days after Mitchell's death, the remains of two-year-old Ezekiel  
16 Harry were found in a trash can in Terrebonne Parish; and

17 WHEREAS, according to court records, the coroner determined that Ezekiel died  
18 from blunt force trauma to the head; and

1           WHEREAS, according to Fox 8 WVUE news, a neighbor alleges that before his  
2 death, she filed a complaint with DCFS about the screams she kept hearing from the home  
3 of Ezekiel and his sibling; and

4           WHEREAS, a 2016 DCFS transition report prepared for Governor John Bel Edwards  
5 stated that "the population's most in need are underserved" and "child safety is at risk"; and

6           WHEREAS, in March 2022, DCFS Secretary Marketa Garner Walters testified to  
7 the Louisiana Legislature that DCFS was "drowning" and has "never had enough staff in  
8 child welfare" during her time there; and

9           WHEREAS, on January 2024, the WAFB investigative team reported that since  
10 March 2023, one hundred fifty foster children had one thousand eight hundred and seventy-  
11 six hotel stays; and

12           WHEREAS, on February 19, 2024, the secretary of DCFS, David Matlock, told  
13 WRKF Talk Louisiana that his agency was in a "death spiral" and that it is "hemorrhaging"  
14 employees; and

15           WHEREAS, in the February 2024 interview, Secretary Matlock stated that DCFS  
16 "has been eviscerated by funding cuts that have profoundly affected the agency's ability to  
17 handle child welfare cases"; and

18           WHEREAS, according to the 2024 DCFS Annual Progress and Services Report,  
19 thirty percent of Louisiana foster children are moved to a new placement within ten days,  
20 and forty percent are moved within thirty days, which is below the national average; and

21           WHEREAS, research shows that foster children require stability to encourage and  
22 promote positive outcomes in education and health; and

23           WHEREAS, there is an alleged lack of provision of physical health and meaningful  
24 mental health services to children in DCFS state custody, even in completing initial medical  
25 examinations and behavioral needs assessments for children in state custody; and

26           WHEREAS, in honor of Ezekiel Harry, the Legislature of Louisiana passed  
27 "Ezekiel's Law" to authorize the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board to form subcommittees  
28 to study the causes of child abuse and develop strategies to reduce the occurrence of child  
29 abuse; and

1           WHEREAS, the Partners in Protecting Children Subcommittee of the Children's  
2 Cabinet Advisory Board was created to study the causes and effects of child abuse and  
3 neglect, the legal aspects of child protection and foster care, and effective training programs  
4 for employees who work with families where child abuse is suspected.

5           THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the  
6 Legislature of Louisiana does hereby direct the Partners in Protecting Children  
7 Subcommittee of the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board to the study the needs of the child  
8 welfare system in this state.

9           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study shall analyze the challenges facing  
10 children and families in this state that receive assistance and care through the Department  
11 of Children and Family Services and provide recommendations to improve outcomes and  
12 protect children.

13           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Partners Protecting Children Subcommittee  
14 shall submit a written report summarizing its findings and recommendations to the House  
15 Committee on Health and Welfare and the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library  
16 by February 1, 2025.

17           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the  
18 executive director of the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board and the secretary of the  
19 Department of Children and Family Services.

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DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

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HR 305 Original

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Requires the Partners in Protecting Children Subcommittee to submit a summary report of its findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Health and Welfare and the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library by Feb. 1, 2025.