

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 167

BY SENATOR BARROW

A RESOLUTION

To create and provide for the Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse Investigation Processes.

WHEREAS, Dr. David Finkelhor, Director of the Crimes against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire, has stated, "The impact of child sexual abuse is profound and long-lasting, affecting not only the victims but also their families and communities. Early and effective intervention is crucial to mitigate these effects and to bring justice to the victims"; and

WHEREAS, national statistics indicate that approximately one in ten children will be sexually abused before their eighteenth birthday, with an estimated sixty percent of victims never disclosing their abuse, and only twelve percent of child sexual abuse cases being reported to authorities; and

WHEREAS, the National Children's Alliance's 2023 annual report states that, in Louisiana, child advocacy centers served a total of 6,144 children with 4,105 reports of child sexual abuse; and

WHEREAS, in calendar year 2023, the Department of Children and Family Services reported 1,999 investigations involving at least one allegation of sexual abuse or juvenile sex trafficking affecting 2,340 individual alleged child victims; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of a Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse Investigation Processes is essential to thoroughly examine the current processes for investigating child sexual abuse, identify gaps and weaknesses, and recommend actionable improvements to better protect and support victims.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby establish and provide for the Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse Investigation Processes to study the methods, systems, investigative techniques, and management of investigations involving sexual abuse of children, and to propose recommendations, together with specific proposals for legislation, if any, by written report to the Senate and to the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library as required by R.S. 24:771 and 772, no later

than February 28, 2025.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the purposes of the Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse Investigation Processes shall include but not be limited to the following:

(1) Investigating current procedures and protocols used by law enforcement, child protective service agencies, or other relevant agencies in the investigation of child sexual abuse cases.

(2) Evaluating the effectiveness of investigative practices used in Louisiana and identifying any deficiencies or areas needing improvement.

(3) Recommending legislative and procedural changes to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and sensitivity of investigations.

(4) Promoting interagency collaboration and communication to produce a comprehensive approach to investigating child sex abuse.

(5) Encouraging timely, compassionate, and effective support services including medical, psychological, and legal assistance.

(6) Identifying and developing specialized training programs for professionals who investigate or provide support in sexual abuse cases involving children including law enforcement officers, social workers, medical personnel, prosecutors, and educators.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force should consider accepting public testimony for the purpose of achieving its goals.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall consist of members from each of the following, to be appointed by the specified entity:

(1) Two representatives from the Department of Children and Family Services, appointed by the secretary.

(2) A law enforcement officer with experience investigating sexual abuse in children, appointed by the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association.

(3) A juvenile court judge appointed by the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

(4) A family court judge appointed by the Louisiana District Judges Association.

(5) A district attorney appointed by the Louisiana District Attorneys Association.

(6) A forensic interviewer appointed by the Louisiana Alliance of Children's

Advocacy Centers.

(7) A child psychologist appointed by the chairman of the Louisiana State Board of Examiners of Psychologists.

(8) A survivor of child sexual abuse appointed by Sexual Trauma Awareness & Response.

(9) A custodial parent or caretaker of a child who has been the subject of a child sexual abuse investigation, appointed by the secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services.

(10) A noncustodial parent of a child who has been the subject of a child sexual abuse investigation appointed by Fathers On a Mission (FOAM).

(11) A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, appointed by the president of the Louisiana State Board of Nursing.

(12) The president of the Louisiana Senate, or his designee.

(13) The state child ombudsman, or her designee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each designating authority shall submit the names of designees to the task force to the president of the Louisiana Senate no later than August 15, 2024.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the task force shall convene for its first meeting no later than October 1, 2024, at the call of the president of the Louisiana Senate or his designee, and at the first meeting, the members shall elect a chairman and other officers as the task force may deem appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a majority of the task force shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, and all official actions of the task force shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the quorum.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the task force shall serve without compensation, except per diem or expense reimbursement to which they may be individually entitled as members of their constituent organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall receive staff support from one or more of the entities from which the task force's membership is designated or appointed, at the discretion of the task force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall terminate on the date of the submission of its report, if any, or February 28, 2025, whichever occurs first.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the president of the Louisiana Senate, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association, the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the Louisiana District Judges Association, the Louisiana District Attorneys Association, the Louisiana Alliance of Children's Advocacy Centers, the Louisiana State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, Sexual Trauma Awareness & Response, Fathers On a Mission, the Louisiana State Board of Nursing, and the state child ombudsman.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE