

SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR
CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2395

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 31, 2022

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2395.

This bill makes various changes to the New Jersey Child Abuse and Neglect Task Force.

Specifically, the bill amends section 2 of P.L.1994, C.119 (C.9:6-8.75) to allocate the task force in, but not, of, the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Notwithstanding its allocation in the DCF, the task force will be independent of any supervision or control by the DCF. Currently, the task force is not allocated to any department and functions as a separate entity outside of the purview of any department.

The bill also amends section 2 of P.L.1994, C.119 (C.9:6-8.75) to expand the purview of the Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (subcommittee) to: 1) include the review and development of recommendations regarding the performance of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) in the DCF; and 2) review, analyze, and make recommendations regarding the DCF's performance in providing child welfare services to children and families as outlined in the bill. No later than 12 months after the bill is enacted, and annually thereafter, the subcommittee will be required to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and Legislature. Current law requires the subcommittee to only review and develop recommendations regarding the staffing levels of the DCPP, and does not specify the types of services provided by the DCF or when the review is to be completed.

The bill further amends section 2 of P.L.1994, C.119 (C.9:6-8.75) to: 1) require the Legislature to annually appropriate to the DCF sufficient funding to permit the subcommittee to hire independent contracted staff or obtain other resources needed to carry out its responsibilities under the bill; and 2) require the task force to appoint at least 15 members to the subcommittee to review the DCF's performance and develop recommendations. Currently, the task force does not provide funding to the subcommittee to review, analyze, and make recommendations regarding the DCF's performance, nor does current law require that the task force appoint members to the subcommittee. The bill also requires the Commissioner of Children

and Families to ensure that no child protection worker is concurrently responsible for more than 15 cases at any time, unless the commissioner determines that assignment of cases in excess of this limit is temporarily necessary to ensure the life and safety of any child under the care and supervision of the DCF.

The bill provides that, if the average daily caseload of child protection workers exceeds 15 cases per worker for two consecutive months, the DCF is to be considered non-compliant with caseload standards established pursuant to bill and is to: 1) within 14 days of initial non-compliance, deliver to the Governor, the Legislature, and the subcommittee, notice of the non-compliance and a summary of emergent efforts being made to rectify the non-compliance; and 2) post, on a monthly basis, on its Internet website, the average daily Statewide caseload of child protection workers until the average daily caseload has been maintained at 15 or fewer cases per worker for 30 days.