

STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Human Services and Housing

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No Revenue Impact

Action Date: 04/20/15

Action: Do Pass As Amended, Be Printed Engrossed, And Rescind Subsequent Referral To Judiciary.

Meeting Dates: 04/08, 04/20

Vote:

Yeas: 9 - Buehler, Evans, Gallegos, Hayden, Keny-Guyer, Parrish, Piluso, Stark, Taylor

Prepared By: Robyn Johnson, Committee Administrator

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Attorney General to file suit in circuit court on behalf of employees of Department of Human Services (DHS) in certain internally-substantiated cases. Directs DHS to convene and staff "The Task Force on Safety for Child Welfare Employees." Outlines membership, objectives and process. Compels written report and presentation to legislature by September 15, 2016. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Incidence of stalking involving DHS employees
- Protection and stalking orders
- Attorney and court fees relating to stalking and protective orders

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

Adds DHS Director's permission to requirements for Attorney General to file suit in circuit court.

BACKGROUND:

The number and severity of threats made against frontline employees of the Department of Human Services (DHS) has increased in recent years, particularly for child welfare workers. There are ways that DHS can and does support employees threatened by clients; however, there are cases where further legal action is necessary to protect these workers, and in some cases, their families. Currently, a DHS worker experiencing threats in their private life as a result of their work, is personally responsible for retaining legal counsel, and paying their fees and court costs relating to necessary protective and stalking orders.

House Bill 3391-A allows the Department of Justice to intervene on behalf of DHS employees to receive legal help relating to personal safety, if necessary, as a result of their work duties. The measure also creates a task force to give further consideration to the safety of all other DHS employees and make recommendations.