

STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Human Services and Early Childhood

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No Revenue Impact

Action Date: 05/21/15

Action: Do Pass The A-Eng Bill And Refer To Ways And Means By Prior Reference.

Meeting Dates: 05/21

Vote:

Yeas: 4 - Gelser, Kruse, Monnes Anderson, Olsen

Exc: 1 - Dembrow

Prepared By: Cheyenne Ross, 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 cases of threat to personal safety. Creates Task Force on Safety for Child Welfare Employees staffed by DHS. Outlines membership, objectives and process. Requires report to legislature by September 15, 2016. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Personal experiences of DHS case workers

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The number and severity of threats made against front-line employees of the Department of Human Services (DHS) has reportedly increased in recent years, particularly for child welfare workers. There are ways that DHS can and does support threatened employees; however, there are situations that call for further legal action. To proceed with further legal action, a DHS case worker is currently personally responsible for retaining legal counsel if they wish, and for paying associated costs.

House Bill 3391-A allows the Department of Justice to provide legal assistance to DHS employees when their personal safety is threatened as a result of their work. The measure also creates a task force to give further consideration to worker safety issues.