

TO: House Human Services and Housing Committee

RE: House Bill 3191

ON: March 19, 2019

Chair Keny Guyer, vice chairs Noble and Sanchez, members of the committee,

My name is Sandi Springer and I am a MAPS worker at DHS in Dallas. In my position I train workers and support retention in the field. I am writing today in support of House Bill 3191.

An audit by the Secretary of State in January of 2018 found that current challenges “compromise the division’s ability to perform essential child welfare functions. These challenges include chronic understaffing, overwhelming workloads, high turnover, and a large proportion of inexperienced staff in need of better training, supervision, and guidance.”

The first step in turning this around is to provide DHS with funding to be at 100% of the workload model. To our knowledge, DHS has never been funded at 100% of the workload model since it was created in 2008.

Research has shown one of the biggest indicators of parental success is a strong engagement with their caseworker. This can’t happen when caseloads are three to four times higher than recommended, impeding caseworkers’ ability to effectively build relationships with parents, children, and providers. Having time to talk to foster parents and engage them as part of the team is a huge piece of foster parent retention!

I am asking you to pass House Bill 3191 as part of the solution. HB 3191 is a two-part solution to tackle training and workload issues for child welfare case workers. First, the bill clarifies that DHS caseworkers need to be supported in prioritizing trainings required by the department, and in continuing their education. The bill creates enforcement mechanisms to push DHS and the legislature to fully fund child welfare at 100% of the workload model, helping reduce caseloads and improve outcomes for kids and families, while also improving conditions for workers.

Thank you for your time,

Sandi Springer

MAPS