

"AN ACT TO CREATE A JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH; TO PROVIDE THAT THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH SHALL ALSO FUNCTION AS AN AD INTERIM COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES."

WHEREAS, the children of this Nation face a myriad of problems; and

WHEREAS, legislative matters affecting children are assigned to many different standing committees which results in lack of comprehensive planning for children's needs and services and too often children fall through the cracks;

WHEREAS, recent federal legislation has been introduced which would encourage state planning to develop a unified policy for all children; and

WHEREAS, the consolidation of children's issues for review by a single legislative committee would insure that complex, interdisciplinary problems affecting children and funding needed for delivery of services to children would receive a more thorough consideration of the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, it is in the public interest that the General Assembly cooperate with the Governor, the various federal and state agencies and the Congress in making continual review of the problems and needs of children, and to explore means by which this State can address and resolve those problems in a comprehensive manner;

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. There is hereby created a joint standing committee of the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Arkansas General Assembly, to be known as the "Joint Committee on Children and Youth." Said Committee shall be a select committee of the House and Senate, whose members shall be chosen as follows:

(a) five (5) members of the Senate, to be named by the Senate Committee on Committees, and

(b) five (5) members of the House of Representatives to be named by the Speaker of the House. Members of the Joint Committee on Children and Youth shall be appointed at each regular biennial session of the General Assembly and shall serve until the convening of the next regular session of the General Assembly. Provided, that members appointed to said Joint Committee shall continue to serve thereon until they resign or cease to serve as a member of the house from which they were appointed.

The Senate Committee on Committees shall designate one (1) of the Senate members of the Joint Committee on Children and Youth to serve as the Senate Co-chairman of said Committee, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall designate one (1) of the House members appointed to the Joint Committee on Children and Youth to serve as the House Co-chairman of said Committee. The Co-chairmen of the Joint Committee on Children and Youth shall preside at alternate meetings of said Committee unless the Co-chairmen shall agree otherwise.

SECTION 2. Bills pertaining to safety, health, development, and problems of children shall be referred to the Joint Committee on Children and Youth.

In addition, the Joint Committee on Children and Youth shall make continuing studies and shall cooperate with the appropriate agencies of this State, agencies of the United States government and the Congress of the United States in the exchange and dissemination of information and in the development of legislation, designed to coordinate planning and to try new ways to prevent young people from falling through the cracks. Members appointed to the Joint Committee on Children and Youth shall serve on said Committee in addition to their service on the regular standing and select committees of the House and Senate.

SECTION 3. (a) The members of the House of Representatives and the Senate appointed at each regular session of the General Assembly to the Joint Committee on Children and Youth shall constitute a joint ad interim committee of the Arkansas General Assembly to function in the interim between the sine die adjournment or extended recess of the regular session of each General Assembly until the convening of the next regular session of the General Assembly, or convening of the current General Assembly during an extended recess. Said Joint Ad Interim Committee shall be known as the "Joint Interim Committee on Children and Youth," and shall function in addition to the other joint interim committees of the Arkansas General Assembly established by law. In the event a vacancy shall occur on the Joint Interim Committee on Children and Youth, said vacancy shall be filled in the same manner as provided for the initial appointment.

(b) The Joint Interim Committee on Children and Youth shall make continuing studies pertaining to the safety, health, development, and problems of children, either initiated by said Committee or referred to it by either house of the General Assembly for study, in the interim between sessions of the General Assembly. Interim study proposals and resolutions filed with the Legislative Council under the provisions of Section 3 of Act 90 of 1973 for review and referral to the appropriate germane Joint Interim Committee of the General Assembly which relate to children, shall be referred to the Joint Interim Committee on Children and Youth, and said Committee shall undertake each study referred to it by members of the General Assembly or by the Legislative Council, and shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations in regard to each such study request prior to the convening of the next regular session of the General Assembly.

In addition, the Joint Interim Committee on Children and Youth shall exercise leadership in the interim between legislative sessions, and shall attempt to coordinate for the various committees of the General Assembly, the various activities, studies, and planning activities of the General Assembly which relate to the children and youth, delivery of services to children and use of funding resources for programs and services. The Joint Interim Committee on Children and Youth shall cooperate with the Governor, the appropriate administrative agencies of this State, legislative and administrative agencies of other states, and with the federal government, including participation in regional and national meetings and seminars of state and federal officials in the exchange of information and data on children and youth problems and resolution of those problems.

SECTION 4. (a) Members of the Joint Interim Committee on Children and Youth shall be entitled to per diem and mileage for attending each meeting of the Joint Interim Committee on Children and Youth, or in attending to Committee-authorized business at the same rate as provided by law for members of the General Assembly for attending meetings of the Joint Interim Committees of the General Assembly. Said per diem and mileage, including reimbursement for expenses for attending out-of-State meetings as provided by law shall be paid from funds appropriated for per diem, mileage, and expenses for members

of the General Assembly for attending Joint Interim Committee meetings, or from other funds provided by law for such purpose.

(b) The Bureau of Legislative Research of the Arkansas Legislative Council shall furnish staff assistance as may be requested by the Joint Interim Committee on Children and Youth.

SECTION 5. The Joint Interim Committee on Children and Youth shall meet upon call by either or both of the Co-chairmen of said Committee, or at such other times as may be provided in the Committee rules, or upon written call by any five (5) of its members. The Committee shall cooperate with the Council of State Governments, the Southern Legislative Conference, the National Legislative Conference and its committees, and other appropriate conferences or associations of public officials concerned with the problems of children and youth, for the purpose of coordinating the activities and resources of the legislative departments of the sister states to assist the Congress of the United States and the federal government is coordinating state and regional programs for the safety, health, development, and problems of children and youth.

SECTION 6. The provisions of this Act shall be in addition and supplemental to the laws of this State and the rules of the House and Senate pertaining to the standing and interim committees of the General Assembly and of the House and Senate, and shall repeal only such laws or parts of laws as may be specifically in conflict with this Act.

SECTION 7. EMERGENCY. It is hereby found and determined by the General Assembly that the future well being of the State of Arkansas lies in a good beginning for each child; that the problems facing the children of our society pose an immediate and future peril to the health, safety and welfare of the people of this State and immediate steps are necessary to coordinate planning and development of comprehensive legislation to meet the needs of children and youth, and that the immediate passage of this Act is necessary to enable the Seventy-Sixth General Assembly to establish a standing committee which will make studies, not only during regular session of the General Assembly, but in the interim period between legislative sessions designed to keep the General Assembly of this State fully in contact with the development of meaningful solutions to the problems facing children and youth, and in the development of legislation to carry out such solutions. Therefore, an emergency is hereby declared to exist, and this Act being necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval.

APPROVED: 4/1/87

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