

2 State of Arkansas
3 92nd General Assembly
4 Regular Session, 2019

A Bill

SENATE BILL 12

5
6 By: Senator A. Clark

7 Filed with: Senate Committee on Judiciary
8 pursuant to A.C.A. §10-3-217.

9 For An Act To Be Entitled

10 AN ACT TO AMEND THE DEFINITION OF "NEGLECT" AND THE
11 LAW CONCERNING CLOSURES OF CHILD MALTREATMENT
12 INVESTIGATIONS; TO MAKE CERTAIN ACTS OF A PARENT,
13 GUARDIAN, CUSTODIAN, OR FOSTER PARENT NONCRIMINAL;
14 AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

15 16 17 Subtitle

18 TO AMEND THE DEFINITION OF "NEGLECT" AND
19 THE LAW CONCERNING CLOSURES OF CHILD
20 MALTREATMENT INVESTIGATIONS; AND TO MAKE
21 CERTAIN ACTS OF A PARENT, GUARDIAN,
22 CUSTODIAN, OR FOSTER PARENT NONCRIMINAL.

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

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27 SECTION 1. TEMPORARY LANGUAGE. DO NOT CODIFY. Legislative findings.
28 The General Assembly finds that:

29 (1) Everyone desires the safety of all children;

30 (2) A child raised under constant adult supervision misses
31 opportunities for growth and, as a result, may end up stunted developmentally
32 and physically;

33 (3) The alarming rise of obesity and diabetes in childhood is
34 almost certainly linked to the insistence of parents and guardians on driving
35 their children to school and activities instead of allowing their children to
36 walk;

1 (4) As measured by incidences of mental health difficulties,
2 today's over-supervised youth experience more difficulties upon reaching
3 adulthood than earlier generations;

4 (5) Earlier generations learned resilience by walking,
5 bicycling, playing, helping out, and solving problems without constant adult
6 intervention;

7 (6) Parents and guardians often are in the best position to
8 weigh the risks and make decisions concerning the safety of children under
9 their care, including where their children may go, with whom, and when; and

10 (7) The excessive prosecution of parents and guardians who have
11 done nothing more than briefly and safely permit their children to remain
12 unsupervised has introduced unnecessary governmental intrusion into the homes
13 of families and diverted valuable public resources to inconsequential and
14 trivial matters.

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16 SECTION 2. TEMPORARY LANGUAGE. DO NOT CODIFY. Legislative intent.

17 It is the intent of the General Assembly that this act:

18 (1) Protect and promote a parent or guardian's inherent right to
19 raise his or her children; and

20 (2) Protect a parent or guardian's decision to grant his or her
21 children unsupervised time to engage in activities that include without
22 limitation playing outside, walking to school, bicycling, remaining briefly
23 in a vehicle, and remaining at home.

24
25 SECTION 3. Arkansas Code Title 5, Chapter 27, Subchapter 1, is amended
26 to add an additional section to read as follows:

27 5-27-101. Noncriminal acts of parents, custodians, guardians, and
28 foster parents.

29 An act of a parent, custodian, guardian, or foster parent described
30 under § 12-18-103(14)(C) is not a criminal offense.

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32 SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 12-18-103(14), concerning the definition of
33 "neglect" under the Child Maltreatment Act, is amended to add an additional
34 subdivision to read as follows:

35 (C) "Neglect" does not include a parent, custodian,
36 guardian, or foster parent who permits his or her child to perform the

1 following actions unsupervised if the child is of sufficient capacity to
2 avoid immediate danger and a significant risk of harm:

3 (i) Travel to and from school including without
4 limitation traveling by walking, running, or bicycling;

5 (ii) Engage in outdoor play;

6 (iii) Remain for less than fifteen (15) minutes in a
7 vehicle if the temperature inside the vehicle is not or will not become
8 dangerously hot or cold; or

9 (iv) Remain at home before and after school if the
10 parent, custodian, guardian, or foster parent:

11 (a) Returns home on the same day on which the
12 parent, custodian, guardian, or foster parent gives the child permission to
13 remain at home;

14 (b) Makes provisions for the child to be able
15 to contact the parent, custodian, guardian, or foster parent on the same day
16 on which the parent, custodian, guardian, or foster parent gives the child
17 permission to remain at home; and

18 (c) Makes provisions for any reasonably
19 foreseeable emergencies that may arise on the same day on which the parent,
20 custodian, guardian, or foster parent gives the child permission to remain at
21 home;

22
23 SECTION 5. Arkansas Code § 12-18-619, concerning the closure of child
24 maltreatment investigations by the Department of Human Services and the
25 Department of Arkansas State Police, is amended to add an additional
26 subsection to read as follows:

27 (d) The Department of Human Services and the Department of Arkansas
28 State Police shall close a child maltreatment investigation against a parent,
29 custodian, guardian, or foster parent who is alleged to have committed an act
30 described under § 12-18-103(14)(C).

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34 Referred requested by the Arkansas Senate
35 Prepared by: JNL/VJF