

**ONE HUNDRED FOURTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION - 2016**  
**COMMITTEE STATEMENT**  
**LB746**

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**Hearing Date:** Thursday January 21, 2016  
**Committee On:** Health and Human Services  
**Introducer:** Campbell  
**One Liner:** Adopt the Nebraska Strengthening Families Act, change provisions for guardians ad litem and services for children, and create the Normalcy Task Force

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**Roll Call Vote - Final Committee Action:**  
Advanced to General File with amendment(s)

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**Vote Results:**  
**Aye:** 7 Senators Baker, Campbell, Crawford, Fox, Howard, Kolterman, Riepe  
**Nay:**  
**Absent:**  
**Present Not Voting:**

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**Verbal Testimony:**

**Proponents:**

Kathy Campbell  
Sarah Helvey  
Raevin Bigelow  
Cassy Blakely  
Kerri Rockwell  
Tom McBride  
Mandi Solie  
Kim Hawekotte  
Katie McLeese Stephenson  
Julia Tse  
Laura McCormack

**Representing:**

District 25  
Nebraska Appleseed  
Self  
NE Children and Families Foundation  
Self  
NE Juvenile Justice Association  
Self  
Foster Care Review Office  
Nebraska Children's Commission  
Voices for Children  
Self

**Opponents:**

**Representing:**

**Neutral:**

**Representing:**

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**Summary of purpose and/or changes:**

Implements the federal Strengthening Families Act in Nebraska to provide foster youth with a statement of their rights and the documents needed to transition to adulthood, to provide foster parents with the ability to make decisions based on a reasonably prudent parent standard, and to include biological parents as possible.

Requires that all children placed in out-of-home care have an opportunity to participate in age or developmentally appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities. Defines the parameters for the reasonable and prudent parent standard required to be used in determining what types of activities are appropriate for the child. Nothing in the act will affect the parental rights of a parent whose rights have not been terminated, the bill requires that biological parents be consulted in making decisions about the appropriateness of activities. It further requires the appropriateness of activities to be considered at family team meetings.

Removes the option of another planned permanent living arrangement (AAPLA), or independent living, for foster youth under age 16.

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The bill makes new requirements on DHHS in its contracts, oversight, and training functions for foster care agencies and child caring institutions. There are new requirements in the bill for court findings to assess whether the goals of this bill are being met for the children in care. Adds new reporting requirements for guardians ad-litem.

Creates the Normalcy Task Force to monitor and make recommendations on the implementation of this Act and identifies the members required to serve on the task force. Requires the Normalcy Task Force to create and submit an annual report.

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**Explanation of amendments:**

AM1903 were requested by the Department of Health and Human Services, creates an operative date of July 1, 2016, and includes a federal reference regarding credit reports.

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Kathy Campbell, Chairperson