

ONE HUNDRED SIXTH LEGISLATURE

SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 420

Introduced by Howard, 9; Lathrop, 12.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this interim study is to study the racial and ethnic disproportionality that exists in Nebraska's foster care and juvenile justice systems, including, specifically, for youth committed to the youth rehabilitation and treatment centers. Despite the promise of equal protection under the law, there have been continued racial and ethnic disparities in the foster care and juvenile justice systems for youth of color, especially for youth and families who are Native American, African American, or Latino. Based on population size, there is a significantly disproportionate percentage of youth and families of color involved with the foster care and juvenile justice systems.

The issues addressed by this interim study shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) An action plan for reducing racial and ethnic disproportionality in the foster care and juvenile justice systems that includes input from a diverse group of community members of color, including, but not limited to, Nebraska's four federally recognized Indian tribes, and others whose lives have been affected by the foster care and juvenile justice systems;

(2) The need for a formal body, such as a subcommittee of the Nebraska Children's Commission, or a task force, to lead this work and advise the Legislature, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Probation Administration, and the Office of Juvenile Services on recommended policy and practice reform;

(3) Current data limitations, including inconsistencies in data collection, on the race and ethnicity of children and families involved in the foster care and juvenile justice systems;

(4) The need for reporting from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Probation Administration, and the Office of Juvenile Services to be shared with the Legislature;

(5) Specific procedures that may be contributing to the current disproportionality;

(6) Racial disproportionality within the context of known risk factors for system involvement, such as household poverty, and protective factors, such as the availability of community-based prevention services; and

(7) Potential model policies that offer a systemic approach to racial disproportionality in the foster care and juvenile justice systems.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, SECOND SESSION:

1. That the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature shall be designated to conduct an interim study to carry out the purposes of this resolution.

2. That the committee shall upon the conclusion of its study make a report of its findings, together with its recommendations, to the Legislative Council or Legislature.