

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

FIRST SESSION

**LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 29**

Introduced by Cavanaugh, M., 6; Hansen, M., 26.

WHEREAS, Saint Francis Ministries was awarded a five-year, 197-million-dollar child welfare contract to serve abused and neglected children in the eastern service area of Douglas and Sarpy counties as designated pursuant to section 81-3116 by the Department of Health and Human Services; and

WHEREAS, under that contract Saint Francis Ministries has responsibility for approximately 2,500 children who are wards of the State of Nebraska or are in Nebraska families who are in need of services to keep their children safe and healthy; and

WHEREAS, Saint Francis Ministries has been accused in the State of Kansas of gross mismanagement of funds; and

WHEREAS, Saint Francis Ministries has estimated a 27-million-dollar operating loss for the first year of the contract with the Department of Health and Human Services and may be at risk of bankruptcy.

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

1. That the Legislature hereby calls for the Executive Board of the Legislative Council to appoint a special committee of the Legislature to be known as the Eastern Service Area Child Welfare Contract Special Investigative and Oversight Committee of the Legislature. The committee shall consist of nine members of the Legislature. Members shall include two members of the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature, two members of the Appropriations Committee of the Legislature, two members of the Judiciary Committee of the Legislature, two members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee of the Legislature, and one at-large member of the Legislature. The at-large member shall be a resident of the eastern service area. The Eastern

Service Area Child Welfare Contract Special Investigative and Oversight Committee shall elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson from the membership of the committee. The executive board may provide the committee with a legal counsel, committee clerk, and other staff as required by the committee from existing legislative staff. The executive board may authorize the committee to hire outside legal counsel, consultants, and investigators as required by the committee. The committee may hold hearings. After authorization by the executive board, the committee may issue subpoenas to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of any papers, books, accounts, documents, and testimony.

2. The Eastern Service Area Child Welfare Contract Special Investigative and Oversight Committee of the Legislature is hereby authorized to study the Department of Administrative Services and Department of Health and Human Services with respect to the award, implementation, and oversight of the child welfare contract. The committee is also hereby authorized to study the circumstances surrounding the creation and submission of the bid by Saint Francis Ministries including, but not limited to, the actions of Saint Francis Ministries and the communications of its employees and agents. The scope of this authorization expressly includes the communications of former employees or agents of Saint Francis Ministries. The committee shall utilize existing studies, reports, and legislation developed to address the current conditions. The committee shall not be limited to such studies, reports, or legislation. The committee shall investigate placement and quality of care received by the children served by the eastern service area through the contract services agreement with Saint Francis Ministries.

3. The committee shall issue a report with its findings and recommendations to the Legislature no later than December 15, 2021. The committee shall terminate on December 31, 2022.