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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR <u>Lord</u>	LAST UPDATED <u>3/16/23</u> ORIGINAL DATE <u>3/7/23</u>
SHORT TITLE <u>Children Running Away From Foster Homes</u>	BILL NUMBER <u>House Joint Memorial 4/aHHHC</u>
	ANALYST <u>Chenier</u>

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT* (dollars in thousands)

	FY23	FY24	FY25	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
		0-\$120.0	0-\$120.0	0-\$240.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund

Parentheses () indicate expenditure decreases.
 *Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Sources of Information

LFC Files

Responses Received From
 Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD)
 University of New Mexico (UNM)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of HHHC Amendment to House Joint Memorial 4

The House Health and Human Services Committee amendment to House Joint Memorial 4 changes a reference to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act to the state’s Indian Family Protection Act, adds a licensed social worker to the list of members on the taskforce, and changes a reference of “institution of higher education” to “in-state accredited public post-secondary educational institution with a school of social work.”

Synopsis of Original House Joint Memorial 4

This joint memorial asks the Children, Youth and Families Department to convene a task force to make recommendations to the department on how to prevent and recover children missing from foster care. The joint memorial identifies 11 categories of individuals whom the memorial asks be invited to take part in this task force and seven tasks that the task force, if assembled, be asked to undertake. The joint memorial additionally asks the department to invite, as appropriate, five identified categories of individuals to participate in discussions with the task force, if assembled, in addition to other stakeholders.

Next, the joint memorial asks that CYFD “enter into an agreement with an institution of higher education to perform research to support this work” and to conduct focus groups with three identified groups, and finally, that the findings and recommendations be reported to the appropriate legislative committee no later than October 1, 2024. The findings and recommendations report would include findings and recommendations on reducing the number of children who run away from foster homes.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

CYFD said there is no appropriation contained within this joint memorial. While the per diem for the task force itself can be absorbed by existing resources, CYFD cannot absorb the entire administrative cost or the contract amount necessary for an agreement with an institution of higher education to perform research and conduct focus groups, anticipated at a minimum \$120 thousand.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

CYFD said policy already exists within CYFD that outline the steps that need to occur to ensure each child’s needs are met and the steps that need to occur when a child or youth runs away from a placement or becomes missing. These steps include conducting human trafficking assessments, conducting comprehensive assessments and referrals, coordinating with community partners, collaborating with law enforcement, filing a missing person’s report, contacting community partners, contacting family members, filing an Amber Alert, etc. Each month, caseworkers must document efforts to locate missing children on their caseload. These cases are staffed monthly with their direct supervisor and can also be discussed during Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings with local law enforcement and medical staff.

UNM said the bill outlines statistics that prompted the call for a task force. Counts of foster youth running away are high in New Mexico and nationwide, and many of these children become victims of sex trafficking. There currently is no systematic effort to focus on the drivers of running away and on means of finding the children when they go missing.

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