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Resolve, To Create the Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, the Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children is established to create and adopt a policy addressing sexual abuse of children; and

Whereas, the study must be initiated before the 90-day period expires in order that the study may be completed and a report submitted in time for submission to the next legislative session; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1 Task force established. Resolved: That the Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children, referred to in this resolve as "the task force," is established; and be it further

Sec. 2 Task force membership. Resolved: That the task force consists of 12 members appointed as follows:

1. Two members of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate;
2. A representative of an organization representing law enforcement, appointed by the President of the Senate;
3. A representative of a statewide professional teachers organization, appointed by the President of the Senate;
4. Two members of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
5. A representative of an organization involved in the prevention of child abuse, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
6. A person who is a victim of sexual abuse, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
7. A representative of an organization representing school management, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
8. The Director of the Bureau of Child and Family Services within the Department of Health and Human Services, or the director's designee;
9. The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee; and
10. The Director of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention within the Department of Health and Human Services, or the director's designee; and be it further

Sec. 3 Compensation. Resolved: That, notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, members of the task force shall serve without compensation and may not be reimbursed for their expenses; and be it further

Sec. 4 Chairs. Resolved: That the first-named Senate member is the Senate chair and the first-named House of Representatives member is the House chair of the task force; and be it further

Sec. 5 Appointments; convening of task force. Resolved: That all appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this resolve. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative Council once all appointments have been completed. After appointment of all members, the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the task force. If 30 days or more after the effective date of this resolve a majority of but not all appointments have been made, the chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant authority for the task force to meet and conduct its business; and be it further

Sec. 6 Duties. Resolved: That the task force shall make recommendations for preventing child sexual abuse. In making those recommendations, the task force shall:

1. Gather information concerning child sexual abuse throughout the State;
2. Receive reports and testimony from individuals, state and local agencies, community-based organizations and other public and private organizations;
3. Create goals for state policy to prevent child sexual abuse; and
4. Adopt a policy addressing sexual abuse of children. The policy adopted may include age-appropriate curricula for students in prekindergarten to grade 5; methods for increasing teacher, student and parent awareness of issues regarding sexual abuse of children, including warning signs indicating that a child may be a victim of sexual abuse; actions that a child who is a victim of sexual abuse may take to obtain assistance and intervention; and available counseling options for children affected by sexual abuse; and be it further

Sec. 7 Staff assistance. Resolved: That, notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the Legislative Council shall provide necessary staffing services to the task force; and be it further

Sec. 8 Report. Resolved: That, no later than November 7, 2012, the task force shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters. That joint standing committee is authorized to introduce a bill to the First Regular Session of the 126th Legislature related to the subject matter of the report.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This resolve establishes the Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children, which is directed to research issues regarding child sexual abuse in Maine and to adopt policies to address those issues. The policies may include age-appropriate curricula for schoolchildren from prekindergarten to

grade 5 and methods to increase teacher, student and parent awareness of the issues regarding child sexual abuse. The task force is also directed to submit a report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters, and the joint standing committee is authorized to submit legislation to the First Regular Session of the 126th Legislature based on that report.