



SENATOR CHARLES SCHWERTNER, MD
SENATE DISTRICT 5

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Schwertner's DFPS Overhaul Clears Senate Committee, Heads to Floor for Vote

On Child Protection Day at the Texas Capitol, the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services gives unanimous approval to Schwertner's plan to enact sweeping new reforms at the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS).

AUSTIN -- Today, on Child Protection Day at the Texas Capitol, the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services gave its unanimous approval to the Department of Family and Protective Services Sunset Bill (SB 206) authored by Senator Charles Schwertner (R-Georgetown). SB 206 proposes a number of sweeping reforms and operational changes to the state agency charged with overseeing Child Protective Services (CPS) and the state foster care system.

"As the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, I speak with families impacted by child abuse almost every single day," said Schwertner. "As a father of three young children myself, I know that ensuring the safety and protection of our children is one of the Texas Legislature's most important responsibilities."

The reforms outlined in SB 206 were drawn from the Sunset Advisory Commission's review of DFPS, as well as an independent review by the Stephen Group. Both reports outlined serious deficiencies in the areas of recruitment, training and retention of DFPS employees.

The average CPS caseworker spends less than 24 months on the job, and in some regions of the state, turnover rates have climbed as high as 40%. Perhaps most troubling, the Sunset Commission's evaluation found that CPS caseworkers are so mired in bureaucracy that, on average, they spend only 26% of their time interacting directly with children and families.

"The state of Texas cannot, and should not, perpetuate a system that places bureaucracy over the best interests of children, and paperwork over protection," continued Schwertner. "It's not right for families, it's not right for our dedicated CPS caseworkers, and it's certainly not right for our Texas children."

(over)

SB 206 focuses on three main areas to improve child welfare: (1) reducing redundant paperwork and bureaucratic hurdles for CPS caseworkers and increasing the amount of time they are able to spend with children and families; (2) improving retention and reducing turnover at the Department of Family and Protective Services; and (3) improving the support and training of CPS caseworkers.

"Our CPS caseworkers represent some of the finest and most selfless individuals our state has to offer," said Schwertner. " These are people who do what they do -- not because of money, or glory, or fame -- but because they know they have the ability to protect a child that needs their help, to keep them safe, and guard them from the kinds of unspeakable horrors that no child should be forced to endure."

In November 2014, Dr. Charles Schwertner was overwhelmingly reelected to serve the citizens of Senate District 5, a ten-county region of central and east Texas. Following the 83rd Legislative Session, Senator Schwertner was named a "Courageous Conservative" by the Texas Conservative Coalition, a "Lone Star Conservative Leader" by the Texas Conservative Roundtable, and "Senate Freshman of the Year" by Texas Monthly magazine.

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