

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 184

Introduced by Wishart, 27.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this resolution is to examine the contract process and the rates paid to family service providers who serve children and families in the Northern, Southeast, Central and Western Service Areas of Nebraska. Providers in the 91 counties who comprise these service areas contract directly with the Department of Health and Human Services to serve forty-eight percent of the vulnerable children and families who are in the child welfare system across the state. Over the last twelve years, family service providers in these service areas have experienced significant changes to their contracts, resulting in increased expenses and decreased revenue, while only receiving a four-percent rate increase. These circumstances, along with increasing operating expenses, have created a fragile child welfare system that is not sustainable. The contract changes and nearly stagnant rate have left providers struggling to recruit the talent required in Department of Health and Human Services contracts and to provide a competitive wage and benefits package to their current employees. The department has shown no signs of addressing the instability in the system.

The study shall examine:

(1) Services such as: family support, drug test collections, intensive family preservation and intensive family reunification, parenting time and supervised visitation, and travel time for family support and parenting time and supervised visitation;

(2) The annual contracting process that the Department of Health and Human Services utilizes in procuring the services described in this resolution, including, but not limited to, the basis for making changes to each contract, who approves such changes, how the cost and savings of any change to a provider

or the department is calculated, and how those changes are communicated to providers;

(3) The financial impact to both providers and the department of any change to the contract using 2010 as a base year;

(4) The history of any rate increase since 2010;

(5) The annual increase in the budget of the Division of Children and Family Services of the department compared to the annual rate increases for providers since 2010;

(6) The cost of living in Nebraska compared to the annual rate increases for providers since 2010;

(7) The employee benefits, annual starting pay rate, and the rate paid after training by the department for a child and family services specialist since 2010;

(8) The education and experience requirements mandated by the department for employees who work directly with children and families;

(9) The steps the department intends to take, if any, and the timeline in taking those steps, to determine a fair rate to pay providers for the services described in this resolution; and

(10) All other health care, behavioral health, and long-term care provider rates.

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