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This letter reflects the authorization for the committee as approved by Legislative Council at its meeting on April 26, 2023.

To: Legislative Council

Requested by: Representative Michaelson Jenet and Representative Young
With support of: Senators and Representatives Amabile, Armagost, Bacon, Bird, Bockenfeld, Boesenecker, Bottoms, Bradfield, Bradley, Brown, Buckner, Cutter, Danielson, Daugherty, deGruy Kennedy, Dickson, Duran, English, Epps, Evans, Exum, Fields, Frizell, Froelich, Garcia, Ginal, Gonzales, Gonzales-Gutierrez, Hamrick, Hinrichsen, Holtorf, Jodeh, Joseph, Kipp, Kolker, Lieder, Lindsay, Lindstedt, Lukens, Lynch, Mabrey, Marchman, Marshall, Martinez, McCormick, McLachlan, Ortiz, Parenti, Priola, Pugliese, Ricks, Sirota, Snyder, Story, Sullivan, Titone, Valdez, Velasco, Vigil, Weinberg, Weissman, Willford, Wilson, Winter F., Winter T., Young, and Zenzinger

Re: Request for interim study committee regarding Colorado's Child Welfare System

Date: 4/26/2023

Information Required Pursuant to Section 2-3-303.3, C.R.S.

We hereby request that an interim study committee be formed to study Colorado's child welfare system during the interim between the 2023 and 2024 legislative sessions. The interim study committee would be named the "Colorado's Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee."

The policy issues to be studied are Colorado's child welfare system, as a whole, rather than taking a siloed approach to trying to improve aspects of Colorado's child welfare system. The purpose of the child welfare system is to prevent and protect children from child abuse and neglect through the provision of, or referrals to, services and interventions intended to promote child safety, strengthen families, prevent out-of-home placement, support family reunification, and provide adoption and relative guardianship support.

This interim committee would take a holistic look at Colorado's child welfare system to address the major factors facing the system in order to serve our state's children and families in the best possible way. The interim study committee will receive presentations from the numerous existing task forces, commissions, and boards related to child welfare. An opportunity for input from parents, children, relatives, and foster parents with lived experience in Colorado's child welfare system will be provided.

Areas to study will include, but need not be limited to:

- federal laws and Colorado state statute and rules that govern child welfare practice;
- child abuse and neglect reporting, including mandatory reporters;
- the investigation and assessment process;
- the removal process;
- child abuse and neglect rates, types, and recurrence of abuse in Colorado;
- judicial processes related to child welfare practice;
- child welfare training;
- child welfare complaints;
- the Colorado TRAILS System;
- the Core services program;
- differential response;
- facilitated family engagement;
- out-of-home placement services, including kinship and foster care;
- prevention services;
- intervention services;
- social determinants of entering the child welfare system;
- workforce challenges related to hiring and retaining county child welfare workers, including secondary trauma, workload, and compensation;
- behavioral health needs of and services for children, youth, and families and its impact on child welfare involvement;
- the capacity of therapeutic placement options for children and youth with complex medical and behavioral health needs who cannot go home or may be placed out of state; and
- the intersection of child welfare and juvenile justice.

For each area that will be studied, a brief background that lays out mandatory federal requirements, as well as flexibility allowed in local jurisdictions, must be provided.

The interim study committee would need to meet up to 5 times to study the issues.

The interim study committee should consist of 11 members of the General Assembly selected as follows:

- 4 members of the Senate, with 2 appointed by the President of the Senate, 1 appointed by the Majority Leader of the Senate, and 1 appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate.
- 7 members of the House of Representatives, with 2 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, 2 appointed by the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, and 3 appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

Nonlegislative members will not have a role in the interim study committee.

A task force is not necessary to assist the interim study committee in studying the scope of policy issues described above.

The interim study committee will be allowed 5 bills to address the issues it studies.

Additional Information Related to the Interim Study Committee Request

In recognition that the child welfare system does not exist in a silo and is affected by many external conditions and partners, engagement with and from several stakeholders will be critical in order to influence meaningful change in many of these areas. The following agencies and organizations may be called upon to provide assistance or information to the interim study committee:

- the Behavioral Health Administration;
- the Colorado Department of Human Services;
- Colorado hospitals that serve children and youth;
- community mental health agencies;
- the county departments of human or social services;
- courts handling domestic relations cases;
- the Department of Early Childhood;
- the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing;
- dependency and neglect judges and delinquency judges;
- developmental disabilities waiver entities;
- district attorneys;
- Illuminate Colorado;
- the Judicial Branch;
- the Kempe Foundation.
- law enforcement agencies;
- the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman;
- the Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel;
- the Office of the Child's Representative;
- regional accountable entities (RAEs);
- relevant task forces and statutory groups working on juvenile justice issues that intersect with child welfare, including the Colorado Youth Detention Continuum Advisory Board;
- relevant task forces working on child welfare issues;
- relevant task forces working on early childhood and behavioral health topics; and
- residential providers (RCCF, QRTP, PRTF) licensed by state agencies.

The interim study committee would not need to conduct meetings outside of the Denver metropolitan area.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.