

ONE HUNDRED NINTH LEGISLATURE

SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 304

Introduced by Fredrickson, 20.

WHEREAS, the Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for the safety, permanency, and well-being of five thousand one hundred seventy children as of November 30, 2025; and

WHEREAS, the State of Nebraska entered into a contract with Stephens Group in 2022 to conduct a study and make child welfare transformation recommendations for finance and practice models following the transition of the lead agency contract from PromiseShip to Saint Francis Ministries; and

WHEREAS, the State of Nebraska entered into a contract with Epiphany Associates to assist the Department of Health and Human Services to find efficiencies and cost savings in 2024. In doing so, a Phase I report was issued identifying efficiency potential for the Division of Children and Family Services of the Department of Health and Human Services and strategies to increase federal Title IV-E funding; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Health and Human Services has terminated contracts or assumed responsibility for lead agency case management, case management training, family finding, relative and kinship foster care support, the Nebraska Heart Gallery, and Foster Care Closet since 2021; and

WHEREAS, the State of Nebraska eliminated forty million dollars in Department of Health and Human Services funding during the 2024 Special Session and the Department of Health and Human Services has identified a Division of Children and Family Services budget deficit for the 2026-27 fiscal year.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, SECOND SESSION:

1. That the Legislature hereby calls for the Legislative Oversight Committee to be designated to review, investigate, and assess the effect of

child welfare efficiency practices on child safety, quality of Department of Health and Human Services services, and public and private workforce stability.

2. That the committee shall consult with the department, service providers currently or formerly under contract to the department, the Supreme Court, the Office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare, the Foster Care Review Office, and stakeholders representing state and local government, provider organizations, consumers, consumer advocates, and other parties as the committee deems helpful.

3. That the committee shall utilize existing studies, reports, and past presentations of information by the department relating to the effort to improve the child welfare system. The committee shall not be limited to such studies, reports, or presentations.

4. The committee shall issue a report with its findings and recommendations to the Legislature no later than December 1, 2026. Issues to be reported upon shall include, but need not be limited to:

(a) The utilization of evidence-based interventions by the Division of Children and Family Services of the Department of Health and Human Services;

(b) The effect of the child welfare efficiency practices and contract terminations on meeting the federal Child and Family Service Reviews' outcomes and indicators on safety, permanency, and well-being, including placement stability and case manager continuity;

(c) The impact of expanded services by the Department of Health and Human Services on case load ratios, Child and Family Services Specialist turnover, including cross-department position changes, and workforce stability;

(d) The continuity of services and transportation for children and families in all areas of the state for which the Department of Health and Human Services is responsible;

(e) The return on investment and system of accountability for consultant recommendations to improve the practice and financing of child welfare in the State of Nebraska; and

(f) The option of requesting the Legislative Audit Office and the Auditor

of Public Accounts to conduct a joint performance and fiscal audit or separate audits of child welfare reforms.