

SENATE BILL NO. 781

BY SENATOR JACKSON

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AN ACT

To amend and reenact Children's Code Article 551, relative to legal representation of children; to provide with respect to multi-disciplinary interaction of an attorney representing a child in a child abuse and neglect case, together with other professionals involved with the child; to provide for an effective date; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. Children's Code Article 551 is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

Art. 551. Legislative findings

The legislature finds that society has a responsibility to protect children from abuse and neglect. Provision of independent counsel for abused and neglected children is an essential due process right provided by Louisiana law to ensure sound and fair decision making concerning children's safety, permanency, and well-being. Counsel providing representation in child protection proceedings should have specialized knowledge and skills essential for effective representation, **and should participate in multi-disciplinary interaction together with other professionals involved with the child, including interdisciplinary communication, investigation, discovery, meetings, conferences, proceedings, and administrative hearings.** Resources to support the provision of legal representation of children should be used efficiently and equitably to assure qualified representation throughout the state.

1           Section 2. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not  
2 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature  
3 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If  
4 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become  
5 effective on the day following such approval.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_