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H.729

Introduced by Representatives Pajala of Londonderry, Brumsted of Shelburne,
Gregoire of Fairfield, Haas of Rochester, Kornheiser of
Brattleboro, McFaun of Barre Town, Nicoll of Ludlow, Noyes
of Wolcott, Rosenquist of Georgia, and Wood of Waterbury

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Human services; foster care; advisory council

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to establish a
permanent Foster Parent Advisory Council.

An act relating to establishing the Foster Parent Advisory Council

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 33 V.S.A. § 4907 is added to read:

§ 4907. FOSTER PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

(a) Creation. There is created the Foster Parent Advisory Council for the
purpose of advising the Department for Children and Families on matters
affecting the provision of foster care to abused, neglected, or dependent
children, youths, and their families. The Advisory Council shall support and
advance the work initiated by 2016 Acts and Resolves No. 116, which
established a Foster Parent Working Group “to recommend legislation, rules,

1 or policies, or any combination thereof, pertaining to rights and protections for
2 foster parents in Vermont.”

3 (b)(1) Membership. The Advisory Council shall be composed of the
4 following members who shall reflect the State’s racial, ethnic, and geographic
5 diversity:

6 (A) one licensed foster parent from each of the Department’s
7 administrative districts who collectively have experience caring for children of
8 varying ages and development stages and of whom at least one-third are
9 licensed foster parents, appointed by district administrators, in consultation
10 with any organized foster parent groups within each administrative district;

11 (B) the president of the Vermont Foster and Adoptive Family
12 Association; and

13 (C) one member appointed by the Vermont Consortium for Adoption
14 and Guardianship;

15 (2) Members of the Advisory Council shall serve two-year terms and
16 may be reappointed. Any vacancy on the Advisory Council shall be filled in
17 the same manner as the original appointment. The replacement member shall
18 serve for the remainder of the unexpired term.

19 (c) Powers and duties. The Advisory Council shall examine the
20 relationship between foster parents, the Department for Children and Families,
21 and the court system to assess whether any laws, rules, or policies should be

1 amended or implemented to better support the work of foster parents, including
2 the following:

3 (1) access to the Department for Children and Families on evenings and
4 weekends;

5 (2) access to the Department for Children and Families' records about a
6 particular foster child or foster family;

7 (3) scheduling court-ordered visits and appointments with the
8 Department for Children and Families;

9 (4) fear of reprisal for refusal of a placement or raising concerns about
10 the Department for Children and Families or the foster care system; and

11 (5) any regional differences identified in the State's foster care system.

12 (d) Assistance. The Advisory Council shall have the administrative,
13 technical, and legal assistance of the Department for Children and Families.

14 (e) Report. Annually, on or before December 15, the Advisory Council
15 shall submit a written report to the Governor, to the House Committees on
16 Human Services and on Judiciary, and to the Senate Committees on Health and
17 Welfare and on Judiciary containing a summary of its annual activities,
18 findings, and any related recommendations. The Department shall post the
19 report to its website.

20 (f) Meetings.

1 (1) The Commissioner shall call the first meeting of the Advisory
2 Council to occur on or before August 1, 2020.

3 (2) The Advisory Council shall select a chair, vice chair, and secretary
4 from among its members at the first meeting and annually thereafter. A chair,
5 vice chair, and secretary shall not serve in the same roll for more than two
6 consecutive terms.

7 (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

8 (4) The Department shall comply with the Advisory Council's
9 reasonable requests for information, documents, and testimony to the extent
10 that they do not violate client confidentiality.

11 (g) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Advisory Council
12 who are not employed by the State or whose participation is not supported
13 through their employment or association shall be entitled to per diem
14 compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A.
15 § 1010 for not more than four meetings per year, unless further authorized by
16 the Commissioner.

17 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

18 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2020.