



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 736

Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature and the New York State Office of Children and Family Services to develop a parents' bill of rights to be distributed at initial home visits in child protective investigations and made available online.

By Council Member Cumbo

Whereas, The Child Protective Services Act of 1973 (Title 6 of the Social Services Law) established a child protective service in each county of New York State, with each service required to investigate reports of suspected child abuse or maltreatment, to protect children under 18 years old from further abuse or maltreatment, and to provide rehabilitative services for children, parents and other family members involved; and

Whereas, The Child Protective Services Act of 1973 also requires the New York State Office of Children and Family Services ("OCFS") to maintain a Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment ("SCR") to receive telephone calls alleging child abuse or maltreatment within New York State and to relay the information to the appropriate local child protective service; and

Whereas, In New York City, the Administration for Children's Services ("ACS") is the local child protective service and is required to commence an investigation within 24 hours of receiving a report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment from the SCR; and

Whereas, The child protective investigation must include at least one home visit with one face-to-face contact with the parents or guardians of the child named in the SCR report; and

Whereas, According to ACS, in Fiscal Year 2014, there were 55,529 investigations of SCR reports pertaining to children in New York City; and

Whereas, According to the ACS Office of Advocacy, parents who are involved with the child welfare system are often initially frightened, suspicious, and intimidated because they lack information about and are unfamiliar with system rules and regulations; and

Whereas, According to a 2015 report by Public Advocate Letitia James, children in New York City spend more than twice as long on average in foster care as children in the rest of the country do, and many parents of children in foster care have reported difficulty accessing adequate and appropriate services from ACS, leading to unnecessary impediments to reunification; and

Whereas, A parents' bill of rights could address these problems by setting forth the rights of parents and guardians while they are involved with the child welfare system; and

Whereas, The parents' bill of rights could be distributed by child protective services caseworkers to parents or guardians at the initial home visit to ensure that parents and guardians are aware of their rights from the outset of the child protective investigation and also could be available on OCFS's website; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Legislature and the New York State Office of Children and Family Services to develop a parents' bill of rights to be distributed at initial home visits in child protective investigations and made available online.

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