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Short Title: Dominique Moody Act.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 13, 2025

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO MAKE VARIOUS CHANGES TO THE LAWS REGARDING ABUSE,
3 NEGLECT, AND DEPENDENCY CASES FOR JUVENILES.

4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

5
6 **PART I. CHILD WELFARE CASE ESCALATION TEAM**

7 **SECTION 1.(a)** Article 1 of Chapter 108A of the General Statutes is amended by
8 adding a new Part to read:

9 "Part 2C. Child Welfare Case Escalation Team.

10 **"§ 108A-15.25. Child Welfare Case Escalation Team.**

11 (a) Child Welfare Case Escalation Team. – The Division shall maintain a team of
12 representatives that conducts escalation assessments, consistent with this section, of juveniles
13 that have a history of child protective services attention due to a combination of safety and risk
14 factors. The purpose of the team is to do all of the following:

15 (1) Support county departments of social services.

16 (2) Provide an additional level of review to ensure child safety statewide.

17 (3) Provide quality assurance of the child protective services history of a family
18 who has returned to the attention of child protective services, including
19 assessing the quality of prior service intervention and further decisions of
20 services provided to ensure the safety and well-being of juveniles moving
21 forward with the family.

22 (b) Staff. – The team is staffed by the Division, including the assigned manager and
23 escalation specialists. The team shall collaborate and coordinate with (i) the director of the
24 regional social services department, (ii) the director of the county department of social services
25 where the juvenile subject to the escalation notification form resides, and (iii) local law
26 enforcement.

27 **"§ 108A-15.26. Definitions.**

28 The following definitions apply in this Part:

29 (1) Caretaker. – As defined in G.S. 7B-101.

30 (2) Division. – The Division of Social Services of the Department of Health and
31 Human Services.

32 (3) Extensive child welfare history. – Any one or more of the following:



* S 2 8 0 - P C S 3 5 4 7 2 - C I A - 5 8 *

- 1 a. Involvement of a medically complex juvenile with any prior child
2 welfare history who requires subspecialty care by two or more
3 specialties.
4 b. Receipt of a second report for medical neglect within six months of
5 the current report.
6 c. Involvement of a juvenile that requires devices to sustain their
7 function, such as a tracheostomy or gastric tube, who has had three or
8 more prior cases for concerns of medical neglect.
9 d. Families with five or more child protective services cases with
10 concerns for neglect regardless of case decision or families that have
11 three or more cases, if any of those cases involved concerns for abuse.
12 e. Families that have three or more prior child protective services reports
13 with concerns for domestic violence or active or current drug activity.
14 f. Any report on an active temporary safety provider, kinship care
15 provider, or legal guardian.
16 g. Cases in which there exists a previous child protective services history
17 with the family and involves a near fatality of a juvenile.
18 h. Any case that has had a prior history involving a child fatality as a
19 result of concerns for abuse or neglect where any child currently
20 resides in the home.
21 i. Multiple prior involvements with child welfare services, including
22 in-home services or permanency planning.
23 (4) High-risk home. – A home or individual that meets any of the following
24 criteria:
25 a. History of extensive child welfare involvement.
26 b. Two or more known screened out reports alleging abuse or neglect of
27 any juvenile that indicate a pattern of concern despite prior screening
28 decisions.
29 c. History of prior removal and placement of any juvenile into foster or
30 kinship care.
31 d. Two or more substantiated or unsubstantiated reports that demonstrate
32 a pattern consistent with chronic or habitual neglect or abuse of any
33 juvenile.
34 e. Ongoing medical or mental health neglect, such as repeated reports of
35 failing to address any juvenile's medical or mental health needs, with
36 allegations consistent across multiple reports and time frames.
37 (5) Juvenile. – As defined in G.S. 7B-101.
38 (6) Near fatality. – As defined in G.S. 7B-2902.
39 (7) Team. – The Child Welfare Case Escalation Team.

40 **"§ 108A-15.27. Child Welfare Case Escalation Team initial procedure.**

41 (a) Criteria. – The director of the county department of social services shall proceed
42 through the process of notification of the Child Welfare Case Escalation Team under subsection
43 (b) of this section if a county department of social services receives a report of abuse or neglect
44 to screen under Article 3 of Subchapter I of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes that involves a
45 juvenile residing or located in a high-risk home.

46 (b) Notification. – If a child welfare report meets the criteria of subsection (a) of this
47 section, the receiving county department of social services shall complete an escalation
48 notification form within two business days and return via email or automated process to the
49 escalation team.

50 (c) Information Sharing. – The assigned escalation specialist shall coordinate with the
51 county department of social services to obtain access to the entirety of the case record to address

1 immediate safety of the juvenile. Upon request, the county department of social services shall
2 provide any records in their possession related to the juvenile's case and identified in the
3 escalation notification form. Pursuant to G.S. 7B-302, the escalation specialist may also demand,
4 in writing, records in possession of State or local law enforcement.

5 **"§ 108A-15.28. Child welfare case escalation assessment.**

6 (a) Assessment. – Once the escalation specialist receives all pertinent information and
7 records from the county department of social services under G.S. 108A-15.27, the escalation
8 specialist shall do all of the following:

9 (1) Assess child welfare history, including all reports and findings, interviews
10 conducted and collateral interviews, safety plans developed for the juvenile,
11 and services provided to the family.

12 (2) Identify gaps in services and other areas that impact safety of the juvenile.

13 (3) Review the overall safety planning for the juvenile in the current assessment
14 to determine if there are additional steps required to ensure safety.

15 (4) Create a chronological time line of child protective services intervention to
16 understand the maltreatment factors of concern related to the family to aid in
17 decision making.

18 (b) Collaboration. – The escalation specialist assigned to the case and other team
19 members shall provide necessary technical assistance to the county department of social services
20 throughout the assessment phase of the child protective services case to identify any patterns or
21 contributory factors from past history that may impact a caretaker's ability to assess and control
22 for present danger threats. The escalation specialist shall do all of the following in collaboration
23 with the county department of social services:

24 (1) Provide guidance to the county regarding the case decision and in identifying
25 services needed for incorporation into the family case plan, taking into
26 account the family's history and interventions identified in the chronological
27 time line.

28 (2) Guide current intervention steps and improve practice, any practice concerns
29 from child protective services involvement, and discuss that involvement with
30 the county director of social services and the director of the regional social
31 services department.

32 (c) Response. – The county department of social services shall respond to all unaddressed
33 safety concerns identified through the team's review process immediately or within the same day
34 of notification.

35 (d) Review. – The team and other assigned Division and Department of Health and
36 Human Services staff shall review records to ensure that practices that have deficiencies are
37 corrected and there is communication with county department staff and others to improve child
38 welfare practices at all levels across the county departments of social services."

39 **SECTION 1.(b)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
40 Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services (Division), (i) the sum of five hundred
41 fifty thousand dollars (\$550,000) in recurring funds beginning in the 2026-2027 fiscal year and
42 (ii) the sum of one hundred fifty-seven thousand dollars (\$157,000) in nonrecurring funds for the
43 2026-2027 fiscal year for six full-time equivalent positions to staff and implement the Child
44 Welfare Case Escalation Team, as established in this section. These full-time equivalent positions
45 shall include human services program consultants and one human services program manager.

46 **SECTION 1.(c)** The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social
47 Services, shall explore means and resources needed to automate and reduce the burden on the
48 county workforce to alert the Division of escalation reviews as established under this section.
49 When exploring these options, the Division shall consider using the Partnership and Technology
50 Hub for North Carolina to make an automated process for those reviews.

1 **SECTION 1.(d)** The Division shall amend protocols and rules as necessary to
2 integrate Child Welfare Case Escalation Team involvement into the entry of a private residence,
3 as provided for under G.S. 7B-302(h) to ensure seamless and coordinated assistance for juveniles
4 at risk of abuse or neglect.

5
6 **PART II. CPS EMPLOYEE ASSESSMENT HOME VISIT AND RECORD**
7 **MODIFICATIONS**

8 **SECTION 2.(a)** The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social
9 Services, shall adopt rules to amend Subchapter 70A of the North Carolina Administrative Code
10 and update associated Division policies; Child Protective Services Assessments Policy, Protocol,
11 and Guidance; and the Partnership and Technology Hub for North Carolina to require directors
12 of departments of social services to require photographs or video evidence to be gathered during
13 an initial investigative assessment response or initial family assessment response when the
14 assessment is investigating allegations that a child is an abused or neglected juvenile and that
15 those photographs or video evidence be maintained as a permanent part of the case file, consistent
16 with the requirements of Article 3 of Subchapter I of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes.

17 **SECTION 2.(b)** G.S. 7B-302(e) reads as rewritten:

18 "(e) In performing any duties related to the assessment of the report or the provision or
19 arrangement for protective services, the director may consult with any public or private agencies
20 or individuals, including the available State or local law enforcement officers who shall assist in
21 the assessment and evaluation of the seriousness of any report of abuse, neglect, or dependency
22 when requested by the director. The director or the director's representative may make a written
23 demand for any information or reports, whether or not confidential, that may in the director's
24 opinion be relevant to the assessment or provision of protective services. Upon the director's or
25 the director's representative's request and unless protected by the attorney-client privilege, any
26 public or private agency or individual shall provide access to and copies of this confidential
27 information and these records to the extent permitted by federal law and regulations. If a
28 custodian of criminal investigative information or records believes that release of the information
29 will jeopardize the right of the State to prosecute a defendant or the right of a defendant to receive
30 a fair trial or will undermine an ongoing or future investigation, it may seek an order from a court
31 of competent jurisdiction to prevent disclosure of the information. In such an action, the custodian
32 of the records shall have the burden of showing by a preponderance of the ~~evidence~~ evidence, or
33 clear and convincing evidence if the request is from the Child Welfare Case Escalation Team
34 pursuant to a written demand under G.S. 108A-15.27(c), that disclosure of the information in
35 question will jeopardize the right of the State to prosecute a defendant or the right of a defendant
36 to receive a fair trial or will undermine an ongoing or future investigation. Actions brought
37 pursuant to this paragraph shall be set down for immediate hearing, and subsequent proceedings
38 in the actions shall be accorded priority by the trial and appellate courts."

39
40 **PART III. RECOGNITION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT TRAINING**

41 **SECTION 3.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
42 Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, the sum of one hundred thousand
43 dollars (\$100,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year for training for child
44 protective services employees and social workers employed by county departments of social
45 services to recognize abuse and neglect. Once developed, the Division shall ensure that this
46 training is virtually available for future trainings and continuing education for those employees
47 that need it. The Division shall prioritize training specialists prior to dissemination to the entirety
48 of social workers statewide.

49
50 **PART IV. LIABILITY**

1 **SECTION 4.** The North Carolina Department of Justice shall provide
2 recommendations to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services
3 on reducing the State's liability and placing some liability on the county when a county
4 department of social services fails to follow statutory requirements or the State's policies and
5 procedures regarding the provision of child welfare services. The North Carolina Department of
6 Justice shall provide its recommendations, including any necessary statutory changes to
7 effectuate those recommendations, to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and
8 Human Services no later than March 1, 2027.

9
10 **PART V. PROCEDURE FOR EXPUNGEMENT FROM RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUALS**
11 **LIST**

12 **SECTION 5.(a)** G.S. 7B-200(a) reads as rewritten:

13 "(a) The court has exclusive, original jurisdiction over any case involving a juvenile who
14 is alleged to be abused, neglected, or dependent. This jurisdiction does not extend to cases
15 involving adult defendants alleged to be guilty of abuse or neglect. The court also has exclusive
16 original jurisdiction of the following proceedings:

17 ...

18 (9) ~~Petitions for judicial review of a director's determination~~ Proceedings
19 involving placement on or expungement from the responsible individuals list
20 under Article 3A of this Chapter."

21 **SECTION 5.(b)** G.S. 7B-325(b) reads as rewritten:

22 "(b) The petition for expungement shall be filed with the district court of the county in
23 which the abuse or serious neglect report arose. A copy shall be delivered in person or by certified
24 mail, return receipt requested, to the director ~~of the county department of social services of that~~
25 ~~county, who determined the abuse or serious neglect and identified the individual seeking~~
26 expungement as a responsible individual. The petition for expungement shall contain the name,
27 date of birth, and address of the individual seeking expungement, the name of the juvenile who
28 was the subject of the determination of abuse or serious neglect, and facts that invoke the
29 jurisdiction of the court."

30
31 **PART VI. CLARIFY CHILD WELFARE PROCEDURE**

32 **SECTION 6.(a)** G.S. 7B-900.1(b) reads as rewritten:

33 "(b) Before ordering that a case be transferred to another county, the court shall find that
34 the director of the department of social services in the county in which the action is pending and
35 the director in the county to which transfer is contemplated have communicated about the case
36 and that:

- 37 (1) The two directors are in agreement with respect to each county's responsibility
38 for providing financial support for the juvenile and services for the juvenile
39 and the juvenile's family; or
40 (2) The Director of the Division of Social Services or the Director's designee has
41 made that determination pursuant to ~~G.S. 153A-257(d)~~ G.S. 153A-257(d) or
42 appointed a county department of social services to assume management of
43 the case pursuant to G.S. 7B-302.1(c)."

44 **SECTION 6.(b)** G.S. 7B-901(d) reads as rewritten:

45 "(d) When the court determines that reunification efforts are not required, ~~the reunification~~
46 is excluded as a permanent plan. The court shall order ~~concurrent a permanent plans plan~~ as soon
47 as possible, after providing each party with a reasonable opportunity to prepare and present
48 ~~evidence.~~ evidence at a permanency planning hearing. The court shall schedule a permanency
49 planning hearing within 30 days from the completion of the initial dispositional hearing to
50 address the permanent ~~plans plan~~ in accordance with G.S. 7B-906.1 and G.S. 7B-906.2."

51 **SECTION 6.(c)** G.S. 7B-903.1(c1) reads as rewritten:

1 "(c1) If juvenile siblings are removed from the home and placed in the ~~nonsecure~~ custody
2 of a county department of social services, the director shall make reasonable efforts to place the
3 juvenile siblings in the same home. The director is not required to make reasonable efforts under
4 this subsection if the director documents that placing the juvenile siblings would be contrary to
5 the safety or well-being of any of the juvenile siblings. If, after making reasonable efforts, the
6 director is unable to place the juvenile siblings in the same home, the director shall make
7 reasonable efforts to provide frequent sibling visitation and ongoing interaction between the
8 juvenile siblings, unless the director documents that frequent visitation or other ongoing
9 interaction between the juvenile siblings would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of
10 the juvenile siblings."

11 **SECTION 6.(d)** G.S. 7B-906.1 reads as rewritten:

12 **"§ 7B-906.1. Review and permanency planning hearings.**

13 ...

14 (e) At any permanency planning hearing where the juvenile is not placed with a parent,
15 the court shall additionally consider the following criteria and make written findings regarding
16 those that are relevant:

17 ...

18 (5) Whether the county department of social services has since the initial
19 permanency ~~plan~~ planning hearing made reasonable efforts to implement the
20 permanent plan for the juvenile.

21 ...

22 (g) At the conclusion of each permanency planning hearing, the court shall make specific
23 findings as to the best permanent plan or plans to achieve a safe, permanent home for the juvenile
24 within a reasonable period of time.

25 ...

26 (m) If the court finds that a proceeding to terminate the parental rights of the juvenile's
27 parents is necessary in order to perfect the primary or sole permanent plan for the juvenile, the
28 director of the department of social services shall file a petition to terminate parental rights within
29 60 calendar days from the date of the entry of the order unless the court makes written findings
30 regarding why the petition cannot be filed within 60 days. If the court makes findings to the
31 contrary, the court shall specify the time frame in which any needed petition to terminate parental
32 rights shall be filed.

33"

34 **SECTION 6.(e)** G.S. 7B-906.2(b) reads as rewritten:

35 "(b) At any permanency planning hearing where the court is ordering reunification as a
36 permanent plan, the court shall adopt concurrent permanent plans and shall identify the primary
37 plan and secondary plan. Reunification shall be a primary or secondary plan unless the court
38 relieved the department of making reunification efforts at initial disposition under
39 G.S. 7B-901(c), previously made written findings under G.S. 7B-906.1(d)(3), the permanent plan
40 is or has been achieved, or the court makes written findings that reunification efforts clearly
41 would be unsuccessful or would be inconsistent with the juvenile's health or safety. The finding
42 that reunification efforts clearly would be unsuccessful or inconsistent with the juvenile's health
43 or safety may be made at any permanency planning hearing, and if made, shall eliminate
44 reunification as a plan. When reunification has been eliminated as a permanent plan, concurrent
45 planning is not required. Unless permanence has been achieved, the court shall order the county
46 department of social services to make efforts toward finalizing the primary and secondary
47 permanent plans or the sole permanent plan and may specify efforts that are reasonable to timely
48 achieve permanence for the juvenile."

49 **SECTION 6.(f)** G.S. 7B-908(c) reads as rewritten:

50 "(c) The court shall consider at least the following in its review and make written findings
51 regarding the following that are relevant:

(1) The adequacy of the permanency plan or plans developed by the county department of social services or a licensed child-placing agency for a permanent placement in the juvenile's best interests and the efforts of the department or agency to implement the plan or plans.

...."

SECTION 6.(g) G.S. 7B-909.2(h) reads as rewritten:

"(h) The court shall not enter an order to approve the post-adoption contact agreement unless the agreement is in writing and executed prior to or as part of the relinquishment. The agreement and order shall not be filed in the juvenile proceeding. When the court approves the post-adoption contact agreement:

...

(4) The record of the civil action shall be withheld from public inspection and may only be examined by the parties to the civil action and their attorneys, the minor ~~adoptee,~~ adoptee after the adoptee turns 18 years old or is otherwise emancipated, or by order of the court."

SECTION 6.(h) G.S. 7B-909.3 reads as rewritten:

"§ 7B-909.3. Modification, enforcement, and termination of a post-adoption contact agreement and order; ~~no right to appeal;~~ rights of adoptive parents.

...

(e) A party subject to an order under this section has no right to appeal the ~~order.~~ order which terminates, modifies, or enforces the post-adoption contact agreement and order. Notwithstanding other provisions of this section, a party to an order under this section has the right to appeal any order finding him or her in contempt of the order as provided for in Chapter 5A of the General Statutes.

...."

PART VII. TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

SECTION 7.(a) G.S. 7B-1101.1(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) In addition to the right to appointed counsel under subsection (a) of this section, a guardian ad litem shall be appointed in accordance with G.S. 1A-1, Rule 17, to represent any parent who is under the age of ~~18 years and who is not married or otherwise emancipated.~~ 16 years. On motion of any party or on the court's own motion, the court may appoint a guardian ad litem for a parent who is 16 or 17 years old and who is not married or otherwise emancipated."

SECTION 7.(b) G.S. 7B-1103(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) A petition or motion to terminate the parental rights of either or both parents to his, her, or their minor juvenile may only be filed by one or more of the following:

...

(4) Any county department of social services, consolidated county human services agency, or licensed child-placing agency to which the juvenile has been ~~surrendered~~ relinquished for adoption by one of the parents or by the guardian of the person of the juvenile, pursuant to G.S. 48-3-701.

(4a) Any county department of social services who has received a safely surrendered infant, pursuant to Article 5A of this Subchapter.

...."

SECTION 7.(c) G.S. 7B-1112 reads as rewritten:

"§ 7B-1112. Effects of termination order.

An order terminating the parental rights completely and permanently terminates all rights and obligations of the parent to the juvenile and of the juvenile to the parent arising from the parental relationship, except that the juvenile's right of inheritance from the juvenile's parent shall not terminate until a final order of adoption is issued. The parent is not thereafter entitled to notice of proceedings to adopt the juvenile and may not object thereto or otherwise participate therein:

(1) If the juvenile had been placed in the custody of or released for adoption by one parent to a county department of social services or licensed child-placing agency and is in the custody of the agency at the time of the filing of the petition or motion, including a petition or motion filed pursuant to G.S. 7B-1103(a)(6), that agency shall, upon entry of the order terminating parental rights, acquire all of the rights for placement of the juvenile, except as otherwise provided in ~~G.S. 7B-908(d)~~, G.S. 7B-908(d1), as the agency would have acquired had the parent whose rights are terminated released the juvenile to that agency pursuant to the provisions of Part 7 of Article 3 of Chapter 48 of the General Statutes, including the right to consent to the adoption of the juvenile.

...."

PART VIII. UNDISCIPLINED AND DELINQUENT JUVENILES; NONSECURE CUSTODY

SECTION 8. G.S. 7B-1905(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) A juvenile meeting the criteria set out in G.S. 7B-1903(a), may be placed in nonsecure custody with a department of social services or a person designated in the ~~order~~ order. The department of social services with placement responsibility is authorized to place the juvenile for temporary residential placement in one of the following:

- (1) A licensed foster home or a home otherwise authorized by law to provide such ~~care;~~ care.
- (2) A facility operated by a department of social ~~services;~~ or services.
- (2a) A facility licensed to provide care to juveniles.
- (3) Any other home or facility—facility, such as the home of a parent, relative, nonrelative kin, or other person with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile, approved by the court and designated in the order.

The department shall not place a juvenile in any unlicensed facility or any facility that is not licensed to provide care for juveniles without the sanction of the court and so designated in the order prior to such placement being made.

In placing a juvenile in nonsecure custody, the court shall first consider whether a relative of the juvenile is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision of the juvenile. If the court finds that the relative is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision, the court shall order placement of the juvenile with the relative unless the court finds that placement with the relative would be contrary to the best interest of the juvenile. Placement of a juvenile outside of this State shall be in accordance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children set forth in Article 38 of this Chapter."

PART IX. INCLUSION OF EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS IN CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS

SECTION 9.(a) G.S. 108A-77.1 reads as rewritten:

"§ 108A-77.1. Definitions.

The following definitions apply in this Article:

- ...
- (7) Department. – As defined in ~~G.S. 7B-101(8a)~~ G.S. 7B-101 and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Public Health and Human Services.
- ...
- (10) Multidisciplinary team. – A group of professionals who represent various disciplines and work collaboratively pursuant to a written protocol to share information on service provision and investigations by law enforcement or a department to inform the investigation and prosecution of child maltreatment

cases and to coordinate services in response to reports made of child maltreatment. The multidisciplinary team works solely on behalf of children served by a Children's Advocacy Center. In addition to the members listed in this subdivision, a multidisciplinary team may include other professionals involved in the delivery of services to victims of child maltreatment and their appropriate caregivers. Participation in a multidisciplinary team shall not preclude any member from carrying out any mandated responsibility of his or her profession. A Children's Advocacy Center's multidisciplinary team must include, at a minimum, the following professionals:

- a. A member of participating law enforcement agencies.
- b. The county district attorney or assistant district ~~attorney~~attorney or tribal prosecutor for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.
- c. A member of the department's child protective services unit.
- d. A local mental health provider.
- e. A local health care provider.
- f. A victim advocate.
- g. Children's Advocacy Center staff.

...."

SECTION 9.(b) G.S. 108A-77.4(c) reads as rewritten:

"(c) Disclosure of information and records outlined in subsection (b) of this section shall only be released or otherwise made available to the following:

- (1) The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and county departments.
- (2) Law enforcement agencies, a prosecuting district ~~attorney~~attorney, a tribal prosecutor for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, or the Attorney General.
- (3) Health care providers or local management entity/managed care organizations providing medical or psychiatric care or services to the child, in the case of medical or mental health records.
- (4) The North Carolina Child Fatality Task Force.
- (5) As permitted under G.S. 7B-3100."

PART X. PREDICTIVE RISK MODELING PILOT PROGRAM

SECTION 10.(a) Article 1 of Chapter 108A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Part to read:

"Part 2D. Predictive Risk Modeling for Child Welfare.

"§ 108A-15.30. Predictive Risk Modeling Pilot Program.

(a) Establishment. – The Division of Social Services shall establish a Predictive Risk Modeling Pilot Program (Program) to deploy a State-validated predictive risk model that produces risk stratification tiers for children who are the subject of reports of abuse or neglect. The Program shall be designed to supplement, and not replace, professional judgment by frontline workers, supervisors, and the Child Welfare Case Escalation Team established under Part 2C of this Article.

(b) Purpose. – The purpose of the Program is to do all of the following:

- (1) Provide an additional layer of statewide visibility and consistency around risk recognition across counties.
- (2) Help frontline staff, supervisors, and escalation teams recognize cumulative patterns of concern that may otherwise remain fragmented across multiple referrals, investigations, and system contacts.
- (3) Identify cases that warrant enhanced supervisory review, multidisciplinary consultation, or regional escalation before serious harm occurs.

- 1 (4) Support more informed screening, investigation, and service-delivery
2 decisions.
- 3 (c) Model Requirements. – The predictive risk model deployed under the Program shall
4 meet all of the following requirements:
- 5 (1) Be purpose-built using North Carolina's own child welfare administrative
6 data, trained and validated using the State's historical records, policies, and
7 practice patterns.
- 8 (2) Be deployed entirely within the State's own technical infrastructure and may
9 be integrated directly into the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information
10 System or the Partnership and Technology Hub for North Carolina.
- 11 (3) Produce static statistical risk estimates that are fully human-controlled,
12 nonautonomous, and do not learn or adapt in operation without express
13 authorization by the Division.
- 14 (4) Undergo rigorous validation using non-system outcomes, specifically child
15 fatalities and near fatalities, to assess whether the model meaningfully
16 identifies children at highest risk of serious harm, independent of agency
17 decision making.
- 18 (5) Be subject to equity and fairness analyses stratified by race and ethnicity to
19 ensure the model performs consistently and does not systematically over- or
20 underestimate risk for particular subpopulations.
- 21 (d) Prohibitions. – The predictive risk model shall not be used as the sole basis for any of
22 the following:
- 23 (1) A decision to screen in or screen out a report of abuse or neglect.
- 24 (2) A decision to substantiate or unsubstantiate a finding of abuse or neglect.
- 25 (3) A decision to remove a juvenile from the home.
- 26 (4) A decision to deny services to a family.
- 27 (e) Initial Deployment Modules. – The Division shall initially deploy the predictive risk
28 model through at least two of the following operational modules:
- 29 (1) A hotline call screening module that delivers risk tier information and clinical
30 alerts to supervisors at the point of screening decisions.
- 31 (2) An investigation supervision module that provides supervisors at-a-glance
32 oversight of open investigations organized by risk designation.
- 33 (3) An open in-home case supervision module that provides stratified oversight
34 based on case-weight complexity.
- 35 (4) A practice quality assurance module that offers quality assurance teams a
36 curated list of cases to oversee based on predictive analytics and business
37 rules.
- 38 (f) Integration With Escalation Team. – The Division shall integrate outputs from the
39 predictive risk model into the escalation criteria and workflows established under Part 2C of this
40 Article to enhance the identification of cases warranting team activation.
- 41 (g) Ongoing Monitoring. – The Division or its contracted vendor shall provide
42 continuous monitoring of model performance, validation checks for changes in data or practice,
43 periodic model retraining when warranted, and regular management and oversight reporting.
44 Model performance and calibration shall be periodically reassessed by race and ethnicity.
- 45 (h) Reporting. – Beginning one year after initial deployment, the Division shall report
46 annually to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services on model
47 performance metrics, equity analyses, the number of cases flagged for enhanced review, and
48 outcomes for flagged cases."

49 **SECTION 10.(b)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
50 Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, (i) the sum of two hundred fifty
51 thousand dollars (\$250,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year for the

1 customized build and implementation of a State-validated predictive risk model for child welfare
2 and (ii) the sum of four hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$430,000) in recurring funds beginning
3 in the 2027-2028 fiscal year for ongoing model maintenance and the operation of at least two
4 deployment modules.

5 **SECTION 10.(c)** The Division shall issue a request for proposals or otherwise
6 procure the predictive risk model in accordance with Article 3 of Chapter 143 of the General
7 Statutes. The Division may utilize federal funds, including Title IV-E administrative funds, to
8 offset State costs to the extent permitted under federal law.

10 **PART XI. PUBLIC COUNTY CHILD SAFETY DASHBOARD**

11 **SECTION 11.(a)** Article 1 of Chapter 108A of the General Statutes is amended by
12 adding a new section to read:

13 **"§ 108A-15.31. Public county child safety dashboard.**

14 (a) Dashboard Required. – The Division of Social Services shall develop and maintain a
15 publicly accessible, internet-based county child safety dashboard that reports county-level child
16 safety performance indicators statewide. The dashboard shall be designed for ease of public
17 access and shall allow comparison across counties.

18 (b) Indicators. – The dashboard shall include, at a minimum, the following indicators
19 reported at the county level:

20 (1) Timeliness of child protective services response initiation.

21 (2) Number of reports, investigations, and substantiations.

22 (3) Recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months.

23 (4) Child fatalities and near fatalities with prior child protective services contact.

24 (5) Maltreatment in foster care.

25 (6) Repeat-report household trends.

26 (7) Caseload-to-worker ratios.

27 (c) Update Frequency. – The Division shall update the dashboard at least quarterly.

28 (d) Confidentiality. – The dashboard shall not disclose personally identifiable
29 information of any juvenile, family member, or reporter. All data shall be presented in aggregate
30 at the county level.

31 (e) Time Line. – The Division shall make the dashboard publicly accessible no later than
32 July 1, 2028."

33 **SECTION 11.(b)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
34 Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, (i) the sum of two hundred thousand
35 dollars (\$200,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year for development of the
36 public county child safety dashboard required by this section and (ii) the sum of seventy-five
37 thousand dollars (\$75,000) in recurring funds beginning in the 2027-2028 fiscal year for ongoing
38 maintenance and hosting.

40 **PART XII. ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE REPORTING ON CHILD WELFARE** 41 **ESCALATION**

42 **SECTION 12.** Article 1 of Chapter 108A of the General Statutes is amended by
43 adding a new section to read:

44 **"§ 108A-15.32. Annual report on Child Welfare Case Escalation Team.**

45 (a) Report Required. – Beginning March 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the Division
46 of Social Services shall submit a report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health
47 and Human Services and to the Fiscal Research Division on the activities and findings of the
48 Child Welfare Case Escalation Team.

49 (b) Contents. – The report shall include all of the following:

50 (1) The number of escalation notifications received, by county.

51 (2) The criteria triggering escalation in each case.

- 1 (3) County-level safety trends and recurring operational concerns identified
2 through the team's work.
3 (4) Identified statewide patterns of risk.
4 (5) Intervention activities undertaken and corrective actions recommended or
5 implemented.
6 (6) Outcomes for juveniles involved in escalated cases, including successful
7 interventions that prevented serious injury or death.
8 (7) Recommendations for additional legislative or administrative reforms.
9 (8) If the predictive risk model has been deployed, performance metrics and
10 equity analyses for the model as described in G.S. 108A-15.30(h).
11 (c) Public Availability. – The Division shall publish the report on its publicly accessible
12 website within 30 days of submission to the General Assembly."
13

PART XIII. CHILD FATALITY AND NEAR-FATALITY PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

14 **SECTION 13.(a)** Article 1 of Chapter 108A of the General Statutes is amended by
15 adding a new section to read:

16 **"§ 108A-15.33. Child fatality and near-fatality public disclosure.**
17

- 18 (a) Definitions. – As used in this section:
19 (1) "Fatality" means the death of a juvenile.
20 (2) "Near fatality" means an act that, as certified by a physician, places a juvenile
21 in serious or critical condition.
22 (b) Public Notification Required. – Within five business days of receiving a report
23 involving a child fatality or near fatality for which there is suspected abuse or neglect, or in which
24 abuse or neglect may have contributed to the child's death or serious injury, the Division shall
25 provide a preliminary notification to the public on its website as follows:
26 (1) The age, gender, date of death, and county of the child who has suffered a
27 fatality or a near fatality.
28 (2) Whether the county department of social services is investigating the fatality
29 or near fatality for suspected abuse or neglect.
30 (3) Whether there have been reports, or any current or past cases, of abuse or
31 neglect involving the child or the alleged perpetrator.
32 (4) A detailed synopsis of prior reports or cases of abuse or neglect involving the
33 child or the alleged perpetrator and of the actions taken or determinations
34 made by the county department of social services in response to those reports
35 or cases, including for surviving children in the home.
36 (5) When available, relevant investigative findings, including, but not limited to,
37 the manner and cause of death, the nature of injuries in a near fatality, and
38 coordination with and findings from any related law enforcement
39 investigation.
40 (c) Public Case Summary. – Within 90 days after the date of the report for a case
41 involving a fatality or a near fatality, the Division shall provide to the public a summary report
42 on its website that includes all of the following:
43 (1) Any actions taken by the Department in response to the case.
44 (2) Any changes in policies or practices that have been made to address any issues
45 raised in the review of the case.
46 (3) Any recommendations for further changes in policies, practices, rules, or
47 statutes to address those issues.
48 (d) Designated Liaison. – The Division shall appoint a designated employee to have
49 primary responsibility for and serve as the dedicated liaison for all matters regarding child
50 fatalities and near fatalities, including, but not limited to, management of the public website

1 disclosures required under this section and coordination with the Child Fatality Prevention Team
2 established under G.S. 7B-1406.

3 (e) Notification to General Assembly. – The Division shall notify the cochairs of the Joint
4 Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services within 48 hours of any child
5 fatality that is under investigation for suspected abuse or neglect and in which there exists a prior
6 child protective services history with the family.

7 (f) Confidentiality. – Nothing in this section shall be construed to require disclosure of
8 information that would violate the confidentiality provisions of G.S. 7B-2901, 42 U.S.C. §
9 5106a(b)(2)(B)(ix), or any other applicable State or federal law. The Division shall redact any
10 information whose disclosure is prohibited by law.

11 (g) No Private Right of Action. – This section does not create a private right of action
12 against the State, the Division, or any county department of social services."

13 14 **PART XIV. SAVINGS AND CONSTRUCTION**

15 **SECTION 14.** Nothing in this act shall be construed to repeal, diminish, or otherwise
16 limit:

- 17 (1) The confidentiality protections for juvenile records established under Article
18 29 of Subchapter IV of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes.
- 19 (2) The rights and protections established under G.S. 7B-302 through
20 G.S. 7B-311 regarding the assessment and investigation of reports of abuse or
21 neglect.
- 22 (3) The provisions of Part 2A or Part 2B of Article 1 of Chapter 108A of the
23 General Statutes, as enacted or amended by prior sessions of the General
24 Assembly.
- 25 (4) Any reforms to the child welfare system enacted by the General Assembly
26 during the 2023, 2024, or 2025 sessions, including, but not limited to,
27 provisions relating to central intake, structured decision making, supervisor
28 qualifications, caseworker training requirements, or mandatory reporter
29 protections.
30

31 **PART XV. EFFECTIVE DATE**

32 **SECTION 15.** Subsection (a) of Section 1, subsection (b) of Section 2, Part VI,
33 subsection (a) of Section 10, subsection (a) of Section 11, and Part XIII of this act become
34 effective October 1, 2026. Subsection (b) of Section 1, Part III, subsection (b) of Section 10, and
35 subsection (b) of Section 11 of this act become effective July 1, 2026. The remainder of this act
36 is effective when it becomes law.