

HB 557 -- PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

SPONSOR: Veit

This bill adds a process by which "child residential homes" as defined are required to notify the Department of Social Services of their existence and compliance with provisions that protect the safety of the children in residence. These include: fire and safety inspections, local health department inspections, medical records for all residents, and information about schools serving the children.

It also specifies that the homes must conduct background checks of all employees and volunteers at the home and details the background check findings that will exclude people from working or volunteering in the home. When there are allegations of abuse or neglect in the home, the bill outlines how the Department can petition a court for an order for a home to present a child that is the subject of a child abuse investigation. The bill specifies that any case in which a referral is made to a juvenile officer for removal of a child, a referral will also be made to the Attorney General.

The bill further details that failure to comply with these provisions may result in fines, misdemeanor charges for failure to conduct background checks, and potential removal of children.

The bill specifies that the Department may promulgate necessary rules that include a fee to cover the cost of the notification process. However, it is not permitted to regulate any religious program, curriculum, or ministry.

The bill includes an emergency clause for immediate implementation to protect children.