

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 32

INTRODUCED BY D. LENZ

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF CITIZEN REVIEW BOARDS FOR CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES ISSUES; AND REQUIRING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO THE 70TH LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, the 53rd Montana Legislature established the Citizen Review Board Program Act in 1993; and

WHEREAS, after several years of successful pilot programs throughout the state, the 57th Montana Legislature made the program permanent and expanded it statewide; and

WHEREAS, in 2003, the Legislature did not fund statewide expansion of citizen review boards;

WHEREAS, citizens with lived experience of the child protection system have unique experiences and a special empathy for parents and children who are involved in dependent neglect and abuse cases; and

WHEREAS, citizen review boards allow communities to ensure the child protection system fulfills its mission to protect children and strengthen families, while minimizing trauma caused by court involvement.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee or statutory committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to examine how to revive the Citizen Review Board Program, including:

- (1) funding opportunities for the program, including nongovernment revenue;
- (2) administrative needs;
- (3) coordination between city, county, tribal, and state governments; and
- (4) statewide standards for citizen review boards that provide for overall consistency but accommodate the needs of different communities.

1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the study also examine:

2 (1) cost savings to the state by reduced court involvement; and

3 (2) how citizen review boards can improve the child protection system by:

4 (a) reviewing the quality, equity, and consistency of the statewide Child and Family Services
5 Division's practices and policies and the practices and policies of similar local entities;

6 (b) promoting cooperation among community resources and child protection services at city,
7 county, tribal, and state levels;

8 (c) advocating for resources to protect children from maltreatment and quickly establish
9 permanency plans; and

10 (d) analyzing trends, providing feedback, and recommending policy changes at all levels of the
11 child protection system.

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be
13 presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
15 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2026.

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
17 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 70th Legislature.

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