

- SUBJECT:** Pilot program to match teens in foster care with adult mentors
- COMMITTEE:** Human Services — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Rose, S. King, J. Davis, Eissler, Hughes, Naishtat, Pierson
0 nays
2 absent — Herrero, Parker
- WITNESSES:** For — Ken Martin, Texas Homeless Network; Jason Ray, Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas; Lorie Quirk; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ruby Ramos, Texans Care for Children)
Against — None
On — Beth Engelking, Department of Family and Protective Services
- BACKGROUND:** The Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) runs Texas' foster care programs. Children "age out" of the foster care system on their 18 birthday and no longer are eligible for many of the benefits once afforded them by foster care. DFPS administers certain programs designed to ease the transition from foster care to independent living, including the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program. The PAL program addresses the fact that foster youth may not have the same supports that other youth do in learning money management and job skills or finding housing and transportation.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 3008 would require DFPS to establish a pilot program contracting with a private or nonprofit entity to pair teens in foster care with adult mentors who would provide support and guidance in preparation for the children's transition to adulthood. Foster children age 14 or older residing in Tarrant, Denton, Dallas, or Collin County voluntarily could participate in the pilot program. DFPS would encourage substitute care providers to facilitate a child's participation in the program.

The entity selected to administer the program would have to have demonstrated a history of providing mentoring services similar to the

pilot. Program volunteers would be subject to state and federal background checks.

DFPS would contract with a public, higher education institution in the pilot area to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the pilot program. By January 1, 2011, DFPS and the higher education institution would report to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house, and the Legislature:

- an assessment of the effectiveness of the program;
- recommendations on improvements to the program; and
- recommendations regarding whether the program should be continued on a statewide basis.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2007.