

**SENATE . . . . . No. 31**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

***Gale D. Candaras***

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act requiring child and parent involvement in permanency and placement planning.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Gale D. Candaras</i>	
<i>Cory Atkins</i>	<i>14th Middlesex</i>
<i>Kenneth J. Donnelly</i>	
<i>James E. Timilty</i>	
<i>Denise Provost</i>	<i>27th Middlesex</i>
<i>Benjamin Swan</i>	<i>11th Hampden</i>

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By Ms. Candaras, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 31) of Gale D. Candaras, Cory Atkins, Kenneth J. Donnelly, James E. Timilty and other members of the General Court for legislation to require child and parent involvement in permanency and placement planning . Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**In the Year Two Thousand Eleven**  
\_\_\_\_\_

An Act requiring child and parent involvement in permanency and placement planning.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1                   SECTION 1. Section 51B (c) of chapter 119 is hereby amended by striking the  
2 text and inserting in place thereof the following:

3                   (c) If the department has reasonable cause to believe a child's health or safety is  
4 in immediate danger from abuse or neglect, the department shall take a child into immediate  
5 temporary custody if it has reasonable cause to believe that the removal is necessary to protect  
6 the child from abuse or neglect. The investigation and evaluation shall commence within 2 hours  
7 of initial contact and an interim report with an initial determination regarding the child's safety  
8 and custody shall be completed as soon as possible but not more than 24 hours after initial  
9 contact. The final report required under this section shall be complete within five business days  
10 of initial contact. If a child is taken into immediate temporary custody, the department shall  
11 make a written report stating the reasons for such removal and shall file a care and protection  
12 petition under section 24 on the next court day.

13                   Each child who is age 7 or older shall be given a meaningful opportunity to  
14 participate in the development of the case plan and to state his or her preference(s) for initial and  
15 any subsequent placement or custody. The department shall ask any child who is age 7 or older  
16 to provide the names of any kin or other adults with whom the child has a relationship. Further,  
17 the department shall ask any child who is 7 or older, in private, to state his or her preference(s)  
18 for initial and any subsequent placement or custody.

19                   Each parent shall also be asked to provide the name of kin or other adults with  
20 whom the child or the family has a relationship who could serve as a potential placement for the  
21 child. Each parent shall also be given a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development  
22 of the case plan and to state his or her preference(s) for initial and any subsequent placement or  
23 custody of his or her child.

24                   If the department has or is seeking custody of a child, the department shall first  
25 investigate the possibility of placing the child in accordance with the placement preferences of  
26 the child and/or parent(s). The department shall complete that investigation before placing the  
27 child except in the case of an emergency placement, in which case the department shall make  
28 every effort to complete the investigation within 48 hours after the placement, and make  
29 placement changes as appropriate based on the outcome of that investigation. Specific reasons  
30 for placement decisions must be documented in writing in the case file, including the reasons for  
31 rejecting placements identified by the child and/or parent(s).

32                   SECTION 2. Section 51B (e) of chapter 119 is hereby amended by striking the  
33 text and inserting in place thereof the following:

34 (e) Notwithstanding subsection (c), whenever the department has reasonable cause to  
35 believe that removal is necessary to protect a child from abuse or neglect, it shall take the child  
36 into immediate temporary custody. If a child is taken into immediate temporary custody, the  
37 department shall make a written report stating the reasons for such removal and shall file a care  
38 and protection petition under section 24 on the next court day.

39 Each child who is age 7 or older shall be given a meaningful opportunity to participate in  
40 the development of the case plan and to state his or her preference(s) for initial and any  
41 subsequent placement or custody. The department shall ask any child who is age 7 or older to  
42 provide the names of any kin or other adults with whom the child has a relationship. Further, the  
43 department shall ask any child who is 7 or older, in private, to state his or her preference(s) for  
44 initial and any subsequent placement or custody.

45 Each parent shall also be asked to provide the name of kin or other a with whom the child  
46 or the family has a relationship who could serve as a potential placement for the child. Each  
47 parent shall also be given a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development of the case  
48 plan and to state his or her preference(s) for initial and any subsequent placement or custody of  
49 his or her child.

50 If the department has or is seeking custody of a child, the department shall first  
51 investigate the possibility of placing the child in accordance with the placement preferences of  
52 the child and/or parent(s). The department shall complete that investigation before placing the  
53 child, and make placement changes as appropriate based on the outcome of that investigation.  
54 Specific reasons for placement decisions must be documented in writing in the case file,  
55 including the reasons for rejecting placements identified by the child and/or parent(s).

56 SECTION 3. Section 51B (g) of Chapter 119 is hereby amended by striking  
57 the text and inserting in place thereof the following:

58 (g) The department shall offer appropriate services to the family of any child  
59 which it has reasonable cause to believe is suffering from any of the conditions described in the  
60 report to prevent further injury to the child, to safeguard his welfare, and to preserve and stabilize  
61 family life whenever possible. If the family declines or is unable to accept or to participate in the  
62 offered services, the department or any person may file a care and protection petition under  
63 section 24.

64 Each family assessment and service plan must document the involvement of the parents  
65 or guardians and children age 7 or older, including children in the custody of the department and  
66 their siblings or half-siblings and children placed by a court in the custody or under the  
67 guardianship of a relative or other suitable person, in the development of the plan. Such efforts  
68 must include, but are not limited to: (a) Encouraging the parents or guardian and the children to  
69 participate in the development and review of the plan and attempting to obtain the parents' or  
70 guardian's signatures documenting their review of the plan (b) obtaining information through  
71 separate and private conversations from the child and the parents about potential kin or other  
72 adults with whom the child or the family has a relationship who could serve as a placement for  
73 the child and (c) If either the parents or child is not involved in the development of the plan, the  
74 reasons must be documented.

75 SECTION 4. Section 23 (c) of Chapter 119 is hereby amended by striking the text and  
76 inserting in place thereof the following:

77 (c) Whenever the department places a child in foster care, the department shall  
78 immediately commence a search to locate any relative of the child or other adult person who has  
79 played a significant positive role in that child's life in order to determine whether the child may  
80 appropriately be placed with that relative or person if, in the judgment of the department, that  
81 placement would be in the best interest of the child.

82 Each child who is age 7 or older shall be given a meaningful opportunity to participate in  
83 the development of the case plan and to state his or her preference(s) for initial and any  
84 subsequent placement or custody. The department shall ask any child who is age 7 or older to  
85 provide the names of any kin or other adults with whom the child has a relationship. Further, the  
86 department shall ask any child who is 7 or older, in private, to state his or her preference(s) for  
87 initial and any subsequent placement or custody.

88 Each parent shall also be asked to provide the name of kin or other adult with whom the  
89 child or the family has a relationship who could serve as a potential placement for the child. Each  
90 parent shall also be given a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development of the case  
91 plan and to state his or her preference(s) for initial and any subsequent placement or custody of  
92 his or her child.

93 If the department has or is seeking custody of a child, the department shall first  
94 investigate the possibility of placing the child in accordance with the placement preferences of  
95 the child and/or parent(s). The department shall complete that investigation before placing the  
96 child and make placement changes as appropriate based on the outcome of that investigation.  
97 Specific reasons for placement decisions must be documented in writing in the case file,  
98 including the reasons for rejecting placements identified by the child and/or parent(s).

99           The department shall also seek to identify any minor sibling or half-sibling of the child  
100 and attempt to place these children in the same foster family if, in the judgment of the  
101 department, that placement would be in the best interests of the children.

102                       SECTION 5. Section 29 of Chapter 119 is hereby amended by striking the text  
103 and inserting in place thereof the following:

104           Whenever an adult with mental retardation who is the responsibility of the department or  
105 a child is before any court under clause (3) of subsection (a) of section 23, or sections 24 to 27,  
106 inclusive, this section or section 29B, that adult or child shall have and be informed of the right  
107 to counsel at all hearings and that the court shall appoint counsel for that adult or child if the  
108 adult or child is not able to retain counsel.

109           Whenever the department or a licensed child placement agency is a party to child custody  
110 proceedings, the parent, guardian or custodian of the adult with mental retardation or the child:  
111 (i) shall have and be informed of the right to counsel at all such hearings, including proceedings  
112 under sections 5 and 14 of chapter 201, and that the court shall appoint counsel if he is  
113 financially unable to retain counsel; and (ii) shall have and be informed of the right to a service  
114 plan or case plan for the adult with mental retardation or child and his family which complies  
115 with applicable state and federal laws and regulations for these plans. The probate and family  
116 court and the juvenile court departments of the trial court shall establish procedures for: (i)  
117 notifying the parent, guardian or custodian of these rights; and (ii) appointing counsel for an  
118 indigent parent, guardian or custodian within 14 days of a licensed child placement agency filing  
119 or appearing as a party in any such action. The department or agency shall provide a copy of the  
120 service or case plan to the parent, guardian or custodian of the adult with mental retardation or

121 child and to the attorneys for all parties appearing in the proceeding within 45 days of the  
122 department or agency filing an appearance in such proceeding. Thereafter, any party may have  
123 the original or changed plan introduced as evidence, and with the consent of all parties the plan  
124 shall be filed with the court. Notwithstanding this section, the court may make such temporary  
125 orders as may be necessary to protect the adult with mental retardation or the child and society.

126           Before any non-emergency change in a child's placement or any non-emergency  
127 hospitalization, and no later than one business day after any emergency change in a child's  
128 placement or any emergency hospitalization, the department shall provide notice of the change in  
129 placement to the child's attorney, the parents' attorneys, and the probation department.

130           The department, upon its request, shall be represented by the district attorney for the  
131 district in which the case is being heard.