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Sen. Schaefer introduces legislation to protect children in government care



ATLANTA – State Sen. Nancy Schaefer (R-Turnerville) recently introduced legislation that provides several directives to the Department of Human Resources (DHR) in regard to child services.

“It is painful to see a child taken away from their parent or guardian, and I firmly believe that the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) and DHR should make every effort to keep the family united,” Sen. Schaefer said. “We also must do everything we can to ensure that those who have to be placed in the care of DHR are given the best and only the best treatment possible.”

Among the provisions set forth by Senate Bill 415, the legislation seeks to ensure that before a child is placed in the custody of DHR, every effort is made to find other family members with which to place the child. Discovery must be provided in termination proceedings with sanctions for failure to provide discovery.

The bill also limits the amount of time DHR has to provide emergency care to 72 hours, requiring the department to respond to emergency situations within that specified amount of time. DHR also would be required to obtain a court order to enter the residence of a child’s parent or guardian in order to

seize a child under certain circumstances. Juvenile deprivation hearings shall **NOT** be closed except upon the written application of the parents or guardian, and for other purposes.

“The purpose of this bill is to prevent children from languishing in the custody of DHR, from being separated from their families unnecessarily and to reunite them with their families as quickly as possible,” Sen. Schaefer added.

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Sen. Nancy Schaefer serves as the Republican Caucus Secretary. She represents the 50th Senate District, which includes Banks, Franklin, Habersham, Hart, Rabun, Stephens and Towns counties and portions of White County. She may be reached by phone at 404-463-1367 or by email at nancy.schaefer@senate.ga.gov.