



2013 Foster Adoption Kinship Awareness Day

Scott signs foster bill

By Lloyd Dunkelberger, Herald-Tribune / Thursday, April 11, 2013
TALLAHASSEE

Foster children will be able to participate in more everyday activities with less intervention from the state child welfare system under a bill signed into law Thursday by Gov. Rick Scott.

The measure (HB 215) will let “kids be kids,” Scott said at the signing ceremonies, while calling sponsors Sen. Nancy Detert, R-Venice, and Rep. Ben Albritton, R-Wauchula, “champions for children.”

“This new law recognizes the importance of allowing children in foster care the ability to take part in everyday activities without the involvement of case managers, provider agencies or the court system,” Scott said.

Scott said the law will lift “burdensome regulations” that hindered the ability of foster children and their parents to participate in ordinary activities such as crossing a county line to go to a beach or taking an overnight trip with a sports team.

Under the law, which takes effect July 1, foster parents will be able to make those decisions using

a “reasonable and prudent” parenting standard.

Detert, who has made improving foster care one of the priorities of her 13 years in the Legislature, said much of the impetus for the legislation came from the foster care children, including those who participate in Florida Youth SHINE, an advocacy group of current and former foster children.

“This bill is the result of wishes of the foster care kids themselves,” Detert said, while also giving credit to the Guardian ad Litem program, which advocates on behalf of children in the welfare system.

Detert said the goal of the legislation was to provide a more normal life for the 19,000 children in Florida’s foster-care system, including the 9,000 living with foster parents or in group homes.

“You don’t want to be a foster care kid. You just want to be a regular kid and this bill will help you do that,” Detert said.

Albritton, the House sponsor, said child advocates told him how the regulations “bubble-wrapped our kids in this veil of safety, not normalcy.”



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2013

Foster Adoption Kinship Awareness Day Continued

“Today is the beginning of a new day,” Albritton said. “It’s the beginning of a new freedom and a new opportunity for kids to live their lives to the maximum like they’re supposed to do.”

David Wilkins, secretary of the Department of Children and Families, said the revamping the foster-care system has been a priority for the child welfare agency since Scott took office in 2011. He called the bill signing “momentous.”

Wilkins said the law recognizes “the importance that every child who is in care in our state needs to have all the opportunities that all the other Florida children have.”

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