



## Legislation Text

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### **TITLE**

### **DHHS - SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION UPDATE ON FOSTER CARE**

### **SPONSOR**

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### **BACKGROUND**

Currently Guilford County has 542 children that are in foster care. This is a significant increase from our numbers previously reported. The number of children in foster care continues to rise across the state due to a number of different factors and variables, including poverty, substance abuse, mental illness, domestic violence and a host of other issues.

Other notable impacts to the number of children in foster care are several federal and state policy changes that have recently been implemented. These changes have also contributed to the increases number of children in foster care.

Our social workers employed with the Children's Services Division have increasing caseloads and shifts have been made within the department to ensure adequate coverage of the amount of foster care cases.

### **Recruitment and Licensing**

Due to the receipt of Adoption Promotion Fund monies, we have been able to invest in major recruitment efforts for foster and adoptive parents. Information Sessions are being offered to the public to raise awareness and answer the questions of potential foster care families. We previously shared radio ads that were being played on the triad's major listening stations. In addition, there are two commercials currently being aired by Time Warner Cable and Fox 8. One featuring a family that adopted children through Guilford County and the other featuring two of our very own Commissioners.

Since our recruitment efforts have increased, we have licensed (35) new homes and (9) pending with the state for approval.

### **Ongoing Plan**

In response to the increasing numbers, our agency has increased efforts to address challenges and gaps including: ongoing conversations with local judges, partnerships with organizations to evaluate needs and the continuous media campaign. This is in an effort to understand our local issues, making the adoption process smoother and recruiting families.

### Financials

In April 2016, Division of Social Services (DSS) staff presented to the Board of Commissioners a report on Foster Care Room and Board expenditures detailing the increased number of children entering custody, and their complicated needs, which has resulted in placement of children in more expensive cost-of-care facilities. The Board of Commissioners approved an increase in the room and board budget.

The current amended budget for room and board payments for foster children is \$5,200,000. As of January 1, 2016, there are 542 children in custody. Based on the current number of children in custody and placements, our projected cost for room and board through June 30, 2017 is \$7.8 million, which is an increase of approximately \$2.6 million over the amended budget. At this time, DSS is proposing that \$1,448,217 will be covered through State/Federal Revenue and is requesting an additional \$794,431 in County funds (appropriated fund balance) through the end of fiscal year 2017.

### **BUDGET IMPACT**

General Fund

\$1,805,569 Increase in Federal/State Revenue

\$794,431 Increase in Appropriated Fund Balance

\$2,600,000 Increase in Appropriation to Health & Human Services (Social Services)

### **REQUESTED ACTION**

Receive Division of Social Services (DSS) update on Foster Care and Room and Board Expenditures and approve:

An increase in Federal/State Revenue of \$1,805,569

An increase in Appropriated Fund Balance of \$794,431

An increase in Appropriation to Health & Human Services (Social Services) by \$2,600,000.