



**House Human Services Committee
Written Testimony of the Texas Pediatric Society
In Support of House Bill 474
April 16, 2019**

Chair Frank, Vice-Chair Hinojosa, and Committee Members,

Members of the Texas Pediatric Society would like to express strong support for House Bill 474 by Representative Donna Howard. This bill will help Texas provide high quality supports for children and families involved in or at risk of involvement with the Texas child welfare system.

In February 2018, Congress passed the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) as a part of the Bipartisan Budget Act. This landmark legislation aims to shift focus and investment nationwide toward family-based prevention services and the placement of children in family-like and least restrictive settings. House Bill 474 will assist the state in implementing FFPSA by assessing foster care and family placements in Texas eligible for federal reimbursement, including:

- Licensed family-based substance use treatment facilities that safely preserve families while parents and caregivers receive substance use treatment supports.
- Qualified residential treatment programs that meet high quality standards for youth in foster care who need intensive therapeutic supports.
- Placements specializing in providing prenatal, postpartum, or parenting support for youth – which will help to break the intergenerational cycle of child welfare involvement.
- Supervised independent placements for young adults to help them transition successfully from the Texas foster care system.
- Placements providing high-quality residential care to children and youth at risk for human trafficking.

In Texas, the data supports the need for these specialized supports. In fiscal year 2017, parent or caregiver substance use was a primary concern in 68% of Child Protective Services removals.ⁱ We also know that youth with complex trauma and previous or current involvement in foster care are especially vulnerable to human trafficking, including youth transitioning out of foster care.ⁱⁱ Lastly, the American Academy of Pediatrics states that children fare best in family-like settings and that congregate care, when necessary, must be of high-quality and short duration - reserved for instances when it is absolutely essential.ⁱⁱⁱ By assessing the capacity and geographic distribution of supports for these specialized populations, Texas can not only identify gaps in services, but also better prepare to maximize federal dollars that support children and preserve families.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice support for this critical piece of legislation. We look forward to continued partnership with Representative Howard and this committee to meet the needs of children and families involved in or at risk for involvement in our child welfare system.

ⁱ Texans Care for Children (2018). 8 Strategies to Address Parental Substance Use and Keep Kids and Parents Healthy, Safe, and Together. Retrieved from: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5728d34462cd94b84dc567ed/t/5b6a00058a922d59c495013a/1533673479372/8-strategies-to-address-parental-substance-use.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Victims of Human Trafficking. Retrieved from: https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Investigations/Human_Trafficking/victims.asp

ⁱⁱⁱ American Academy of Pediatrics (June 2016). AAP Statement Urging Advancement of the Family First Prevention Services Act as Written. Retrieved from: www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/AAPStatementUrgingAdvancementoftheFamilyFirstPreventionServicesActasWritten.aspx.