

HB 2541 by Rep. Garcia Supports Youth in Foster Care Facilities

Testimony to the House Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence Committee

- Ensures youth in foster care spend more time in loving homes with caring families instead of dreary, impersonal facilities with a high risk of abuse
- Improves legal representation of youth in Residential Treatment Centers

Selective, brief use of Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs) can be appropriate — but youth are safer and thrive more in families:

- RTCs serve 13 or more children with mental health needs, including some youth in foster care.
- **DFPS data show only 5% of children in Texas foster care are placed in RTCs — but a third of children who experience abuse, neglect, or exploitation in foster care experience it in an RTC.**¹
- Research from the Annie E. Casey Foundation shows that, overall, youth living in foster care facilities like RTCs are less likely to find a permanent home and less likely to graduate high school compared to youth with foster families, and the cost is up to 10 times more than placement with a family.²
- Serious safety issues have been highlighted in RTCs across Texas, such as Five Oaks in Austin County in 2018, and the Refuge in Bastrop in 2022.

The bill is based on the report commissioned by Sen. Kolkhorst's SB 1575 (87R):

- 26 experts collaborated with the Children's Commission to develop the recommendations.³
- The Senate Special Committee on Child Protective Services also recommended strengthening legal representation and judicial oversight in child welfare cases.⁴

This bill helps youth live with a loving family by:

- Outlining new duties for attorneys or CASA volunteers representing children placed in RTCs.
- Ensuring parents are able to participate in meetings about their child's treatment in an RTC.



¹ Department of Family Protective Services. CPS Placements: Children in Substitute Care on August 31 (FY 2021). DFPS. Residential Child Care Investigations (RCCI) Types of Abuse (FY 2021).

² Casey Family Programs. What are the outcomes for youth placed in group and institutional settings? (2022).

³ DFPS and Texas Children's Commission. Senate Bill 1575 Report to the Legislature (2022).

⁴ Texas Senate Special Committee on Child Protective Services. Report to the 88th Legislature (2022).