**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 63‑7‑2350 OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO RESTRICTIONS ON FOSTER CARE OR ADOPTION PLACEMENTS, TO ADD BACKGROUND CHECK REQUIREMENTS FOR EACH EMPLOYEE OF A RESIDENTIAL FACILITY WHERE CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE MAY BE PLACED.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 63‑7‑2350 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 63‑7‑2350. (A) No child in the custody of the Department of Social Services may be placed in ~~foster care or for adoption~~ a foster home, adoptive home, or residential facility with a person if the person or anyone eighteen years of age or older residing in the home or a person working in the residential facility:

(1) has a substantiated history of child abuse or neglect; or

(2) has pled guilty or nolo contendere to or has been convicted of:

(a) an ‘Offense Against the Person’ as provided for in Chapter 3, Title 16;

(b) an ‘Offense Against Morality or Decency’ as provided for in Chapter 15, Title 16;

(c) contributing to the delinquency of a minor as provided for in Section 16‑17‑490;

(d) the common law offense of assault and battery of a high and aggravated nature when the victim was a person seventeen years of age or younger;

(e) criminal domestic violence as defined in Section 16‑25‑20;

(f) criminal domestic violence of a high and aggravated nature as defined in Section 16‑25‑65;

(g) a felony drug‑related offense under the laws of this State;

(h) unlawful conduct toward a child as provided for in Section 63‑5‑70;

(i) cruelty to children as provided for in Section 63‑5‑80;

(j) child endangerment as provided for in Section 56‑5‑2947; or

(k) criminal sexual conduct with a minor in the first degree as provided for in Section 16‑3‑655(A).

(B) A person who has been convicted of a criminal offense similar in nature to a crime enumerated in subsection (A) when the crime was committed in another jurisdiction or under federal law is subject to the restrictions set out in this section.

(C) At a minimum, the department shall require that all persons referenced in subsection (A) undergo a ~~state~~ fingerprint review to be conducted by the State Law Enforcement Division and a fingerprint review to be conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The department also shall check the State Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect, department records, the equivalent registry system for each state in which the person has resided for five years preceding an application for licensure as a foster parent, the ~~national sex offender registry~~ National Sex Offender Registry, and the state sex offender registry for applicants and all persons twelve years of age and older residing in the home of an applicant.

(D) This section does not prevent ~~foster care placement or adoption~~ placement in a foster home, adoptive home, or residential facility when a conviction or plea of guilty or nolo contendere for one of the crimes enumerated in subsection (A) has been pardoned. However, notwithstanding the entry of a pardon, the department or other entity making placement or licensing decisions may consider all information available, including the person’s pardoned convictions or pleas and the circumstances surrounding them, to determine whether the applicant is unfit or otherwise unsuited to provide foster care services.

(E) For the purposes of this section, ‘residential facility’ means a group home, residential treatment center, or other facility that, pursuant to a contract with or a license or permit issued by the department, provides residential services to children in the custody of the department. This includes, but is not limited to, child caring institutions, emergency shelters, group homes, wilderness therapeutic camps, and organizations with supervised individual living facilities.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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