

1 legal outcomes and child protection outcomes; and

2 WHEREAS, Montana's existing public defender system and specific unit for dependent neglect cases
3 emphasizes early and active engagement, best advocacy for the needs of the child, and adherence to client-
4 directed representation, and any prosecution standardization efforts should incorporate corresponding
5 principles to ensure balanced and just proceedings; and

6 WHEREAS, a legislative study is necessary to assess the need for standardized prosecution practices,
7 the potential expansion of the Child Protection Unit, and the impact of these changes on the efficiency, fairness,
8 and effectiveness of Montana's child welfare system.

9
10 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
11 THE STATE OF MONTANA:

12 That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee or statutory
13 committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, to evaluate the standardization of prosecution in dependent
14 neglect cases and the feasibility of expanding the Child Protection Unit's jurisdiction to handle all dependent
15 neglect and child abuse cases statewide, with the goal of improving outcomes for children, ensuring due
16 process for all parties, and enhancing the overall effectiveness, consistency, and equity of Montana's child
17 welfare system.

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
19 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2026.

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
21 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 70th Legislature.

22 - END -