



The Process of Passing Florida's Reasonable Childhood Independence Law

Florida became the second largest state (after Texas in 2021) to adopt Let Grow-backed changes to its neglect law. Florida's law is much more detailed than Texas's and amends both the criminal and the juvenile/child protection/children's code. Let Grow is especially proud of the work we did with our outstanding sponsors to protect children's rights to independence and family's rights to make decisions as to when they can allow children to be independent without fearing neglect or criminal charges.

The work to change Florida law occurred at the initiation of Rep. Monique Miller (R. District 33, Palm Bay), who was inspired to reach out to Let Grow after she heard a talk by Prof. Jon Haidt that mentioned Let Grow's legislative work and other successes around the country. Despite being a freshman legislator at the time, she led the work on this bill, H. B. 1191. Let Grow provided draft language suggestions, factual support, and testimony at committee hearings. Florida's legislative process is onerous and demanding, especially given the time constraints for passage of legislation: bills must make their way through three different committees in each chamber (Rules, Appropriations and the subject matter committee for children's legislation). Even though she was a freshman legislator, Miller navigated the process with leadership, expertise and passion for the cause. She secured extensive support from key members of the House and first recruited and then worked with Sen. Erin Grall, and later with her co-sponsor Rep. Leonard Spencer, to press forward through multiple submit and committee hearings. Sen. Grall's leadership was key to passage of the companion bill, SB 1282 through the Senate, with unanimous passage of the bill in all three committees where it was heard and unanimous final passage by the full Senate on April 9. House passage followed quickly, spurred by the outstanding reception the bill had received in the Senate, with unanimous votes in every committee first and unanimous passage in the House on April 29.

Jonathan Haidt's support for the effort was pivotally important to the passage of the bill, because Rep. Miller used his work directly in persuading a committee chair who initially was not supportive of the effort (and was not at first willing to call the bill for a hearing, which was a necessary step that needed to be taken quickly if the bill was going to succeed). Thanks to Rep. Miller's dogged efforts to bring the bill forward in the face of stringent deadlines, with passage out of the final committee (Health and Human Services on April 15, making the final deadline by 3 days). The final House vote, taken on April 29 on the bill was also unanimous (116 in favor, 0 opposed)—and in the nick of time, given that there was a May 1, 2025, final deadline for passage.

Governor DeSantis approved the bill on June 20, 2025. It took effect on July 1, 2025.

Let Grow worked closely with Parental Rights Foundation, Reason Foundation, attorneys with the University of Miami Law School and independent lawyers and family members from Florida to support the legislators' work on the bill and Lenore Skenazy helped to publicize Rep. Miller's and Spencer's bipartisan work in the House to get the bill passed.

Additional resources:

Tampa Bay Op-Ed by our sponsors: <https://www.tampabay.com/opinion/2025/04/21/encouraging-free-range-kid-florida-shouldnt-be-crime-column/>

<https://reason.org/commentary/new-georgia-florida-and-missouri-laws-protect-parents-who-teach-their-children-independence/>

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/lifestyle/family/more-states-making-it-legal-to-play-outside/ar-AA1EROkf>