

VETOES

In particular, the Department has serious concerns regarding the caseload ratio for foster care staff. The consent decree requires caseworkers to have an "average" caseload of no more than 20 children. In contrast, SB 847 requires a "maximum" caseload not to exceed 20 children per caseworker. By requiring a "maximum" caseload ratio of 1:20 fails to recognize that in certain circumstances a caseworker may need to have a caseload of more than 20 children on a given day. Moreover, it is estimated that this maximum cap will cost the State an additional \$1.6 million, which is a fiscal implication of concern to the Department of Budget and Fiscal Planning as well.

The State has already committed \$13 million in fiscal year 1989 for improvements in the foster care system, including the creation of 38 new positions, rate increases for foster parents, preventive and support services for foster families, and expanded specialized and emergency foster care beds. Additional funding is expected in fiscal year 1990 to continue the rate restructuring phase-in, maintain the "average" caseload of 1:20, and provide other foster care enhancements.

I share the sponsors' concerns for the quality of care given to children who are entrusted in the State's charge and, therefore, am directing Secretary Massinga to work with the sponsors this interim to develop policy goals for the protection of all children in foster care. These goals should include provisions to assure appropriate and continuing health care for foster care children, assure proper reporting and investigation of suspected cases of child abuse or neglect in foster homes, provide adequate training for foster care providers, and establish minimum expectations for caseworker visits with foster care children.

I believe that the Department, working cooperatively with the sponsors, can accomplish the intent of Senate Bill 847, but at the same time avoid the problems associated with the bill.

For the above reasons, I have decided to veto Senate Bill 847.

Sincerely,
William Donald Schaefer
Governor

Senate Bill No. 847

AN ACT concerning

Foster Care - Child Welfare and Protection

FOR the purpose of requiring certain reports of suspected child abuse or neglect of a child in foster care to be sent to the