

AG Fitch Delivers Testimony at Senate Study Group on Women, Children, and Families



Empowering women and helping them and their children and their families flourish is not accomplished by checking the box. We should never accept “good enough” when it comes to uplifting women and families. They are worth our very best effort. And when Mississippi women thrive, Mississippi itself thrives.

Lynn Fitch

(Jackson, Mississippi) Attorney General Lynn Fitch delivered the following testimony during the Senate Study Group on Women, Children, and Families hearing where she discussed her **Empowerment Project** and gave a preview of her legislative priorities in the 2025 Session. Excerpts of AG Fitch's remarks are below, and video can be found [here](#).

On Foster Care and Adoption:

"A system that does not connect children with loving families as quickly as possible is broken and we must fix it. First, we have to help mothers and support families to keep their homes from becoming environments where children are at risk or where they cannot thrive. Second, when that is not possible, we must streamline the pathway from foster care to forever homes."

"The Attorney General's Office has long been involved in representation of Child Protection Services (CPS) for many years, but in only one portion of the journey a child in foster care takes: terminations of Parental Rights or TPRs. In the past 9 months, our team of attorneys has legally cleared 418 children for adoption."

"I am proud to be working with Commissioner Sanders on a pilot project that brings our attorneys into the other parts of the foster care legal process. We are now working in youth courts and before referees in counties selected by CPS to demonstrate that consistent representation throughout the process is in the best interests of children."

"In addition, AGO attorneys are taking on adoptions throughout the state, rather than relying on private parties to come in and complete the child's journey. We have already taken on more than 250 of these cases since the fiscal year began. The first interests of the child must be our first, last, and every priority."

On Child Support:

"Of the nearly 6 million parents due child support in the most recent year for which data is available, not even half received full payment - NOT EVEN HALF. That is the difference between a child getting a good dinner and a child going to bed hungry."

"The Legislature wrote this into the Lottery law. We withhold winnings when

the lucky ticket holder is in arrears in child support payments. We should be garnishing other gaming winnings to help that child as well."

On Public Assistance Reforms:

"We need to be bold in how we look at our public assistance programs. We want them to be a hand-up and not a hand-out. But that means we need to put all the options on the table and think creatively about how we meet these struggling parents where they are. Childcare cannot simply be a one-size-fits-all model. We need to look at how we can structure our public assistance programs to give parents the ability to use whatever family care model works for them."

"We need to look at how we help people meet their transportation needs. There are too many parts of this State where a functioning vehicle is vital to getting groceries, to getting medical care, to getting education, and to getting employment."

"This is not the time to be timid in looking at how we can use the flexibility afforded to states through TANF and other federal public assistance programs to help break down the barriers to a person's success. We must be bold in our thinking and even bolder in our actions."

On a Parents' Bill of Rights:

"But I ask that the Legislature continue to give parents the support they need to protect their children. They need their government to be their ally, not their adversary. Let's make it clear in our laws that parents are best suited to direct the education, care, and upbringing of their children."

On Maternity Leave:

"Georgia, Arkansas, Tennessee, Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Virginia have all authorized paid parental leave for state employees. Our friends in Alabama came very close in this last legislative session, passing it through their Senate but not making it to the House before sine die. I ask you, Senators, to consider this important step in this next legislative session, as well."

The Senate Study Group on Women, Children, and Families was created by Lieutenant Governor Delbert Hosemann in 2022 and is chaired by Senator Nicole Boyd (R-Oxford). The bipartisan group was constructed to host hearings and welcome written input from the public in the wake of the Mississippi *Dobbs* case.

The Empowerment Project is AG Fitch's policy initiative focused on empowering women and promoting strong Mississippi families. The Mississippi Legislature has since supported and passed [nearly a dozen Empowerment Project priorities](#).

To read AG Fitch's full testimony, click [here](#).

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