

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Title 16 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to crimes and  
2 offenses, so as to define criminal negligence; to provide for legislative findings and intent;  
3 to change the definition of cruelty to children and to provide for third degree cruelty to  
4 children; to provide for penalties; to redefine the term "serious injury" to include sexual  
5 abuse of a minor under the age of 16 years; to provide for related matters; to provide for an  
6 effective date and applicability; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

**SECTION 1.**

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9 The General Assembly seeks to protect the well-being of this state's children while  
10 preserving the integrity of family discipline. The General Assembly believes that balancing  
11 the protection of the health and safety of this state's children, while preserving a parent's  
12 right to discipline his or her child, is important to all Georgians and vital to the safety of this  
13 state's children.

**SECTION 2.**

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15 Title 16 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to crimes and offenses, is  
16 amended in Code Section 16-2-1, relating to the definition of a crime, by designating the  
17 existing Code section as subsection (a) and adding a new subsection (b) to read as follows:  
18 "(b) Criminal negligence is an act or failure to act which demonstrates a willful, wanton,  
19 or reckless disregard for the safety of others who might reasonably be expected to be  
20 injured thereby."

**SECTION 3.**

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22 Said title is further amended in Code Section 16-5-70, relating to cruelty to children, by  
23 striking subsections (c), (d), and (e) and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

1 "(c) Any person commits the offense of cruelty to children in the second degree when such  
 2 person with criminal negligence causes a child under the age of 18 cruel or excessive  
 3 physical or mental pain.

4 (d) Any person commits the offense of cruelty to children in the third degree when:

5 (1) Such person, who is the primary aggressor, intentionally allows a child under the age  
 6 of 18 to witness the commission of a forcible felony, battery, or family violence battery;  
 7 or

8 (2) Such person, who is the primary aggressor, having knowledge that a child under the  
 9 age of 18 is present and sees or hears the act, commits a forcible felony, battery, or family  
 10 violence battery.

11 ~~(d)~~(e)(1) A person convicted of the offense of cruelty to children in the first degree as  
 12 provided in this Code section shall be punished by imprisonment for not less than five nor  
 13 more than 20 years.

14 ~~(e)~~(2) A person convicted of the offense of cruelty to children in the second degree shall  
 15 be punished by imprisonment for not less than one nor more than ten years.

16 (3) A person convicted of the offense of cruelty to children in the third degree shall be  
 17 punished as for a misdemeanor upon the first or second conviction. Upon conviction of  
 18 a third or subsequent offense of cruelty to children in the ~~second~~ third degree, the  
 19 defendant shall be guilty of a felony and shall be sentenced to a fine not less than  
 20 \$1,000.00 nor more than \$5,000.00 or imprisonment for not less than one year nor more  
 21 than three years or shall be sentenced to both fine and imprisonment."

22 **SECTION 4.**

23 Said title is further amended in Code Section 16-12-1, relating to contributing to the  
 24 delinquency, unruliness, or deprivation of a minor, by striking paragraph (4) of subsection  
 25 (a) and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

26 "(4) 'Serious injury' means an injury involving a broken bone, the loss of a member of  
 27 the body, the loss of use of a member of the body, ~~or~~ the substantial disfigurement of the  
 28 body or of a member of the body, ~~or~~ an injury which is life threatening, or any sexual  
 29 abuse of a child under 16 years of age by means of an act described in subparagraph  
 30 (a)(4)(A), (a)(4)(G), or (a)(4)(I) of Code Section 16-12-100."

31 **SECTION 5.**

32 This Act shall become effective on July 1, 2004, and shall apply to all crimes which occur  
 33 on or after that effective date.

**SECTION 6.**

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- 2 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.