

The Senate Committee on Children and Families offered the following substitute to HB 253:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 1 of Chapter 9 of Title 19 of the Official Code Georgia Annotated, relating
2 to general provisions relative to child custody proceedings, so as to prohibit the court from
3 ordering family reunification treatments or services in cases in which the custody of a child
4 is at issue; to provide for a definition; to provide for related matters; to provide for a short
5 title; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 This Act shall be known and may be cited as "Ethan's Law."

9 **SECTION 2.**

10 Article 1 of Chapter 9 of Title 19 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
11 general provisions relative to child custody proceedings, is amended by revising paragraph
12 (7) of subsection (a) of Code Section 19-9-3, relating to the establishment and review of child
13 custody and visitation, as follows:

14 "(7) The judge is authorized to order a psychological custody evaluation of the family
15 or an independent medical evaluation; provided, however, that the judge shall not order

16 family reunification treatments or services. In addition to the privilege afforded a
17 witness, neither a court appointed custody evaluator nor a court appointed guardian ad
18 litem shall be subject to civil liability resulting from any act or failure to act in the
19 performance of his or her duties unless such act or failure to act was in bad faith."

20 **SECTION 3.**

21 Said article is further amended in Code Section 19-9-6, relating to definitions relative to child
22 custody proceedings, by adding a new paragraph, to read as follows:

23 "(3.1) 'Family reunification treatments or services' means any therapeutic intervention
24 which requires:

25 (A) Court ordered restrictions on contact between a child and a parent or legal
26 guardian;

27 (B) Overnight stays for a child in an out-of-state facility, hotel, motel, or camp;

28 (C) The use of private youth transporters or private transportation agents engaged in
29 the use of force, threat of force, physical obstruction, or coercion against a child; and

30 (D) The attendance of, or participation in, educational or experimental workshops."

31 **SECTION 4.**

32 This Act shall become effective on July 1, 2025.

33 **SECTION 5.**

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