



# NEWS RELEASE

Arizona House of Representatives

Representative Barbara Parker (R-10)

1700 West Washington • Phoenix, Arizona • 85007

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## State Representative Barbara Parker Transforms Department of Child Safety Requirements for Reporting Missing, Abducted, or Runaway Children

**STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX** – Landmark legislation signed into law following the legislative session will soon be making a positive impact on missing children’s cases in our state. [House Bill 2651](#), sponsored by Arizona State Representative Barbara Parker, received overwhelming bipartisan support in both the House and Senate when it passed the legislature and was signed into law by the Governor.

ARS 8-810, the Child Safety statute, had no time frame requirement listed to report when a child in state custody went missing. In 2014, Congress passed the Preventing Sex Trafficking Act, which required states to develop policies and procedures for “expeditiously locating any child missing from foster care” and “determining the child’s experiences while absent from care, including screening the child to determine if the child is a possible sex-trafficking victim.” Tragically, audits from the federal Inspector General’s Office and the State Auditor General proved that Arizona’s Department of Child Safety, was not in compliance with either state or federal standards.

**“I did not expect to run this bill, but on January 21, 2023, just 12 days after I was sworn into office, two teen girls were found dead in a water-filled retention basin in my legislative district just blocks away from their group home,”** explained Representative Barbara Parker. **“There was no media coverage of their disappearance until their bodies were found 15 days later. The community where they lived was never given the opportunity to look for them, and it was then that a constituent and foster care advocate, Anika Robinson, reached out to me regarding serious issues regarding the reporting standards of DCS.”**

“This bill signing not only brings renewed hope to foster parents but also establishes a strong framework that acknowledges the significance of collaborative efforts between state agencies, foster parents, and the community in protecting and finding missing foster children,” said **Anika Robinson, President of ASA Now and Jacob’s Mission Community Center**. “By prioritizing the prompt reporting of missing foster children in accordance with federal requirements, engaging the public through the media package, and having proper training for state personnel, Arizona sets an exemplary standard for other states to follow, reaffirming its commitment to the well-being and safety of foster children.”

**“The state should have done more for Sitlalli Avelar and Kamryn Meyers,”** Representative Parker added. **“The vulnerable teens’ disappearance could have been reported to the media in the first 24 hours. Both were on medication for behavioral needs and were at risk for sex trafficking or harm**

due to their acuity. The [National Foster Youth Institute estimates](#) that sixty percent of child sex-trafficking victims are often found to be in state-controlled foster care or child welfare systems. This new law will change this terrible statistic, requiring mandatory 24-hour reporting with detailed deliverables and protocols for each situation of missing, abducted, or runaway children, along with treatment, training, legislative audit oversight, and a detailed checklist explaining how all of this will be communicated to the proper authorities in a timely manner.”

*Barbara R. Parker is a Republican member of the Arizona House of Representatives serving Legislative District 10 in Northeast Mesa and Apache Junction.*

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