# GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA SESSION 2025

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## **HOUSE BILL 370** Committee Substitute Favorable 3/18/25

Short Title:

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GSC Uniform Acts Regarding Children. (Public) Sponsors: Referred to: March 12, 2025 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED AN ACT TO ENACT THE UNIFORM CHILD ABDUCTION PREVENTION ACT AND TO ENACT ARTICLE THREE OF THE UNIFORM UNREGULATED CHILD CUSTODY TRANSFER ACT, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE GENERAL STATUTES COMMISSION. The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts: PART I. UNIFORM CHILD ABDUCTION PREVENTION ACT **SECTION 1.(a)** The title of Chapter 50A of the General Statutes reads as rewritten: "Uniform Child-Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act and Uniform Deployed Parents Custody and Visitation Act. Uniform Acts on Children." **SECTION 1.(b)** Chapter 50A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Article to read: "Article 4. "Uniform Child Abduction Prevention Act. "§ 50A-411. Short title. This Article may be cited as the Uniform Child Abduction Prevention Act. "§ 50A-412. Definitions. In this Article, the following definitions apply: Abduction. – The wrongful removal or wrongful retention of a child. (1) Child. – Defined in G.S. 50A-102. (2) Child-custody determination. – Defined in G.S. 50A-102. **(3)** Child-custody proceeding. – Defined in G.S. 50A-102. (4) Court. – Defined in G.S. 50A-102. (5) Petition. – Includes a motion or its equivalent. (6) Record. – Information that is inscribed on a tangible medium or that is stored (7) in an electronic or other medium and is retrievable in perceivable form. State. – Consists of the following: (8) A state of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the <u>a.</u> United States Virgin Islands, or any territory or insular possession subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. An Indian tribe or band or Alaskan native village that is recognized by b. federal law or formally acknowledged by an entity listed in sub-subdivision a. of this subdivision.



**General Assembly Of North Carolina** Session 2025 1 Travel documents. – Records relating to a travel itinerary, including travel (9) 2 tickets, passes, reservations for transportation, or accommodations. The term 3 does not include a passport or visa. 4 Wrongful removal. – The taking of a child that breaches rights of custody or (10)5 visitation given or recognized under the law of this State. 6 Wrongful retention. – The keeping or concealing of a child that breaches rights <u>(11)</u> 7 of custody or visitation given or recognized under the law of this State. 8 "§ 50A-413. Cooperation and communication among courts. 9 G.S. 50A-110, 50A-111, and 50A-112 apply to cooperation and communications among 10 courts in proceedings under this Article. 11 § 50A-414. Actions for abduction prevention measures. A court on its own motion may order abduction prevention measures in a 12 13 child-custody proceeding if the court finds that the evidence establishes a credible risk of 14 abduction of the child. 15 (b) A party to a child-custody determination or another individual or entity having a right 16 under the law of this State or any other state to seek a child-custody determination for the child 17 may file a petition seeking abduction prevention measures to protect the child under this Article. 18 "§ 50A-415. Jurisdiction. 19 A petition under this Article may be filed in district court if the court has jurisdiction (a) 20 to make a child-custody determination with respect to the child at issue under Article 2 of this 21 Chapter. 22 (b) A district court of this State has temporary emergency jurisdiction under 23 G.S. 50A-204 if the court finds a credible risk of abduction. 24 "§ 50A-416. Contents of petition. 25 A petition under this Article must be verified and include a copy of any existing child-custody 26 determination, if available. The petition must specify the risk factors for abduction, including the 27 relevant factors described in G.S. 50A-417. Subject to G.S. 50A-209(e), if reasonably 28 ascertainable, the petition must contain all of the following: 29 The name, date of birth, and gender of the child. (1) 30 **(2)** The customary address and current physical location of the child. 31 The identity, customary address, and current physical location of the (3) 32 respondent. 33 A statement of whether a prior action to prevent abduction or domestic <u>(4)</u> 34 violence has been filed by a party or other individual or entity having custody 35 of the child and the date, location, and disposition of the action. 36 A statement of whether a party to the proceeding has been arrested for a crime <u>(5)</u> 37 related to domestic violence, stalking, or child abuse or neglect and the date, 38 location, and disposition of the case. 39 Any other information required to be submitted to the court for a child-custody <u>(6)</u> 40 determination under G.S. 50-13.1(a1) or G.S. 50A-209. "§ 50A-417. Factors to determine risk of abduction. 41 42 In determining whether there is a credible risk of abduction of a child, the court must 43 consider any evidence that the petitioner or respondent has done or is doing any of the following: 44 (1) Has previously abducted or attempted to abduct the child. 45 Has threatened to abduct the child. <u>(2)</u>

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including any of the following:a. Abandoning employment.

<u>b.</u> <u>Selling a primary residence.</u>

Has recently engaged in activities that may indicate a planned abduction,

<u>c.</u> <u>Terminating a lease.</u>

(3)

1 Is undergoing a change in immigration or citizenship status that would (9) 2 adversely affect the person's ability to remain in the United States lawfully. 3 Has had an application for United States citizenship denied. (10)4 (11)Has forged or presented misleading or false evidence on government forms or 5 supporting documents to obtain or attempt to obtain a passport, a visa, travel 6 documents, a social security card, a drivers license, or other government-issued identification card or has made a misrepresentation to the 7 8 United States government. 9 Has used multiple names to attempt to mislead or defraud. (12)10 Has engaged in any other conduct the court considers relevant to the risk of <u>(13)</u> 11 abduction. In the hearing on a petition under this Article, the court must consider any evidence 12 (b) 13 that the respondent believed in good faith that the respondent's conduct was necessary to avoid 14 imminent harm to the child or respondent and any other evidence that may be relevant to whether the respondent may be permitted to remove or retain the child. 15 "§ 50A-418. Provisions and measures to prevent abduction. 16 17 If a petition is filed under this Article, the court may enter an order that must include 18 all of the following: 19 The basis for the court's exercise of jurisdiction. (1) 20 **(2)** The manner in which notice and opportunity to be heard were given to the 21 persons entitled to notice of the proceeding. 22 A detailed description of each party's custody and visitation rights and <u>(3)</u> 23 residential arrangements for the child. 24 <u>(4)</u> A provision stating that a violation of the order may subject the party in 25 violation to civil and criminal penalties. 26 <u>(5)</u> Identification of the child's country of habitual residence at the time of the 27 issuance of the order. 28 If, at a hearing on a petition under this Article or on the court's own motion, the court 29 after reviewing the evidence finds a credible risk of abduction of the child, the court must enter 30 an abduction prevention order. The order must include the provisions required by subsection (a) 31 of this section and measures and conditions, including those in subsections (c), (d), and (e) of 32 this section, that are reasonably calculated to prevent abduction of the child, giving due 33 consideration to the custody and visitation rights of the parties. The court must consider the age 34 of the child, the potential harm to the child from an abduction, the legal and practical difficulties 35 of returning the child to the jurisdiction if abducted, and the reasons for the potential abduction, 36 including evidence of domestic violence, stalking, or child abuse or neglect. 37 An abduction prevention order may include one or more of the following: (c) 38 An imposition of travel restrictions that require that a party traveling with the 39 child outside a designated geographical area provide the other party with all 40 of the following: 41 The travel itinerary of the child. a. 42 A list of physical addresses and telephone numbers at which the child b. 43 can be reached at specified times. 44 Copies of all travel documents. c. 45 A prohibition of the respondent directly or indirectly doing any of the <u>(2)</u> 46 following: 47 Removing the child from this State, the United States, or another <u>a.</u> 48 geographic area without permission of the court or the petitioner's 49 written consent. 50 Removing or retaining the child in violation of a child-custody <u>b.</u> determination. 51

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may be used to pay for the reasonable expenses of recovery of the child, including reasonable attorneys' fees and costs if there is an abduction.

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Require the respondent to obtain education on the potentially harmful effects (3) to the child from abduction.

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To prevent imminent abduction of a child, a court may do any of the following: <u>(e)</u>

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Issue a warrant to take physical custody of the child under G.S. 50A-419 or (1) other State law.

- (2) Authorize law enforcement to take any action reasonably necessary to locate the child or obtain return of the child pursuant to an order issued under this Article or other State law.
- (3) Grant any other relief allowed under other State law.
- (f) The remedies provided in this Article are cumulative and do not affect the availability of other remedies to prevent abduction.

## "§ 50A-419. Warrant to take physical custody of child.

- (a) If a petition under this Article contains allegations, and the court finds, that there is a credible risk that the child is imminently likely to be wrongfully removed, the court may issue an ex parte warrant to take physical custody of the child.
- (b) The respondent on a petition under subsection (a) of this section must be afforded an opportunity to be heard at the earliest possible time after the ex parte warrant is executed, but not later than the end of the next day that the district court is in session unless a hearing on that date is impossible. In that event, the court must hold the hearing on the first possible day that the district court is in session.
- (c) An ex parte warrant under subsection (a) of this section to take physical custody of a child must do all of the following:
  - (1) Recite the facts upon which a determination of a credible risk of imminent wrongful removal of the child is based.
  - (2) Authorize law enforcement officers to take physical custody of the child without delay.
  - (3) State the date and time for the hearing on the petition.
  - (4) Provide for the safe interim placement of the child pending further order of the court.
- (d) If feasible, before issuing a warrant and before determining the placement of the child after the warrant is executed, the court may order a search of the relevant databases of the National Crime Information Center system and similar databases of this State or another state to determine if either the petitioner or respondent has a history of domestic violence, stalking, or child abuse or neglect.
- (e) The petition and warrant must be served on the respondent when, or as soon as possible after, the child is taken into physical custody.
- (f) A warrant to take physical custody of a child, issued by this State or another state, is enforceable throughout this State. If the court finds that a less intrusive remedy will not be effective, it may authorize law enforcement officers to enter private property to take physical custody of the child, which may include forcible entry at any hour.
- (g) If the court finds, after a hearing, that a petitioner sought an exparte warrant under subsection (a) of this section for the purpose of harassment or in bad faith, the court may award the respondent reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and expenses.
  - (h) This Article does not affect the availability of relief allowed under other State law.

## "§ 50A-420. Duration of abduction prevention order.

An abduction prevention order remains in effect until the earliest of the following:

- (1) The time stated in the order.
- (2) The emancipation of the child.
- (3) The child's attaining 18 years of age.
- (4) The time the order is modified, revoked, vacated, or superseded by a court with jurisdiction under G.S. 50A-201 through G.S. 50A-203.

#### "§ 50A-421. Uniformity of application and construction.

In applying and construing this Article, consideration must be given to the need to promote uniformity of the law with respect to its subject matter among states that enact the Uniform Child Abduction Prevention Act.

"§ 50A-422. Relation to Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act.

This Article modifies, limits, and supersedes the federal Electronic Signatures in Global and
National Commerce Act, Chapter 96 of Title 15 of the United States Code, but does not modify,
limit, or supersede section 101(c) of the act, 15 U.S.C. § 7001(c), or authorize electronic delivery
of any of the notices described in section 103(b) of the act, 15 U.S.C. § 7003(b)."

SECTION 1.(c) The Revisor of Statutes shall cause to be printed, as annotations to

**SECTION 1.(c)** The Revisor of Statutes shall cause to be printed, as annotations to the published General Statutes, all relevant portions of the Official Comments to the Uniform Child Abduction Prevention Act and all explanatory comments of the drafters of this section as the Revisor may deem appropriate.

**SECTION 1.(d)** This section becomes effective October 1, 2025, and applies to petitions filed or motions made on or after that date.

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# PART II. ARTICLE THREE OF THE UNIFORM UNREGULATED CHILD CUSTODY TRANSFER ACT

**SECTION 2.(a)** Article 3 of Chapter 48 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Part to read:

"Part 2A. Information and Guidance.

# "§ 48-3-230. Title and purpose.

This Part consists of and may be cited as the Information and Guidance Provisions of the Uniform Unregulated Child Custody Transfer Act. The purpose of this Part is to prevent the unlawful transfer of custody of minors, as prohibited by G.S. 14-321.2, by better preparing adoptive parents for issues that may arise when caring for an adopted minor.

## "§ 48-3-231. Definitions.

For the purposes of this Part, the following definitions apply:

- (1) Intercountry adoption. An adoption or placement for adoption of a minor who resides in a foreign country at the time of adoption or placement. The term includes an adoption finalized in the minor's country of residence or in a state.
- (2) Parent. An individual recognized as a parent under other law of this State.
- (3) Prospective adoptive parent. An individual approved or permitted under other law of this State to adopt a minor.
- (4) Record. Information inscribed on a tangible medium or stored in an electronic or other medium and retrievable in perceivable form.

#### "§ 48-3-232. Scope.

This Part applies to placement for adoption of a minor to whom any of the following applies:

- (1) Has been or is in foster or institutional care.
- (2) Previously has been adopted in a state.
- (3) Has been or is being adopted under the law of a foreign country.
- (4) Has come or is coming to a state from a foreign country to be adopted.
- (5) Is not a citizen of the United States.

#### "§ 48-3-233. General adoption information.

Within a reasonable time before an agency places a minor for adoption with a prospective adoptive parent, the agency shall provide or cause to be provided to the prospective adoptive parent general adoption information. The information shall address all of the following:

- (1) Possible physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral issues concerning all of the following:
  - <u>a.</u> <u>Identity, loss, and trauma that a minor might experience before, during, or after adoption.</u>
  - A minor leaving familiar ties and surroundings.
- (2) The effect that access to resources, including health insurance, may have on the ability of an adoptive parent to meet the needs of a minor.

- (3) Causes of disruption of an adoptive placement or dissolution of an adoption and resources available to help avoid disruption or dissolution.
- (4) Criminal prohibitions under G.S. 14-321.2.

### "§ 48-3-234. Nonidentifying information about minor.

- 5 (a) Within a reasonable time before an agency places a minor to whom this Part applies
  6 for adoption with a prospective adoptive parent, the agency shall provide or cause to be provided
  7 to the prospective adoptive parent nonidentifying information specific to the minor, in addition
  8 to information provided pursuant to G.S. 48-3-205, that is known to or reasonably obtainable by
  9 the agency and material to the prospective adoptive parent's informed decision to adopt the minor.
  10 To the extent that it is not already being provided under G.S. 48-3-205, the nonidentifying
  11 information shall include all of the following:
  - (1) The minor's family, cultural, racial, religious, ethnic, linguistic, and educational background.
  - (2) The minor's physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral health.
  - (3) <u>Circumstances that might adversely affect the minor's physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral health.</u>
  - (4) The minor's medical history, including immunizations.
  - (5) The medical history of the minor's biological parents and siblings.
  - (6) The history of an adoptive or out-of-home placement of the minor and the reason the adoption or placement ended.
  - (7) The minor's United States immigration status.
  - (8) Medical, therapeutic, and educational resources, including language-acquisition training, available to the adoptive parent and minor after placement for adoption or adoption to assist in responding effectively to physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral health issues.
  - (b) Subject to the requirements of Article 9 of this Chapter, an agency shall include available records relevant to the information in subdivisions (1) through (8) of subsection (a) of this section when providing the information, regardless of whether the information is provided pursuant to subsection (a) of this section or G.S. 48-3-205.
  - (c) If, before an adoption is finalized, additional information under subsection (a) of this section that is material to a prospective adoptive parent's informed decision to adopt the minor becomes known to or reasonably obtainable by the agency, the agency shall provide the information to the prospective adoptive parent.
  - (d) If, after an adoption is finalized, additional information under subsection (a) of this section becomes known to the agency, the agency shall make a reasonable effort to provide the information to the adoptive parent.

#### "§ 48-3-235. Guidance and instruction.

- (a) An agency placing a minor for adoption shall provide or cause to be provided to the prospective adoptive parent guidance and instruction specific to the minor to help prepare the parent to respond effectively to needs of the minor that are known to or reasonably ascertainable by the agency.
- (b) The guidance and instruction under subsection (a) of this section shall address, if applicable, all of the following:
  - (1) The potential effect on the minor of all of the following:
    - <u>a.</u> <u>A previous adoption or out-of-home placement.</u>
    - b. Multiple previous adoptions or out-of-home placements.
    - <u>c.</u> <u>Trauma, insecure attachment, fetal alcohol exposure, or malnutrition.</u>
    - d. Neglect, abuse, drug exposure, or similar adversity.
    - <u>e.</u> <u>Separation from a sibling or significant caregiver.</u>
    - f. A difference in ethnicity, race, or cultural identity between the minor and the prospective adoptive parent or other minor of the parent.

- (2) <u>Information available from the federal government on the process for the minor to acquire United States citizenship.</u>
- (3) Any other matter the agency considers material to the adoption.
- 4 <u>(c)</u> 5 <u>follows:</u>
- (1) For adoption of a minor residing in the United States, a reasonable time before the adoption is finalized.

The guidance and instruction under subsection (a) of this section shall be provided as

(2) For an intercountry adoption, in accordance with federal law.

## "§ 48-3-236. Information about financial assistance and support services.

Consistent with the purposes of G.S. 48-1-110, on request of a minor who was placed for adoption or the minor's adoptive parent, the agency placing the minor or the Department of Health and Human Services shall provide information about how to obtain financial assistance or support services as follows:

- (1) To assist the minor or parent to respond effectively to adjustment, behavioral health, and other challenges.
- (2) To help preserve the placement or adoption.

## "§ 48-3-237. Agency compliance.

- (a) The Department of Health and Human Services may investigate an allegation that an agency has failed to comply with this Part and may commence an action for injunctive or other relief or initiate an administrative proceeding against the agency to enforce this Part.
- (b) The Department of Health and Human Services may initiate a proceeding to determine whether an agency has failed to comply with this Part. If the Department of Health and Human Services finds that the agency has failed to comply, the Department may suspend or revoke the agency's license or take other action permitted by law of this State.

## "§ 48-3-238. Uniformity of application and construction.

<u>In applying and construing this Part, a court shall consider the promotion of uniformity of the law among jurisdictions that enact Article 3 of the Uniform Unregulated Child Custody Transfer Act.</u>

#### "§ 48-3-239. Relation to Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act.

This Part modifies, limits, or supersedes the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act, 15 U.S.C. § 7001 et seq., but does not modify, limit, or supersede 15 U.S.C. § 7001(c), or authorize electronic delivery of any of the notices described in 15 U.S.C. § 7003(b)."

**SECTION 2.(b)** G.S. 48-3-205 reads as rewritten:

### "§ 48-3-205. Disclosure of background information.

- (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, before Before placing a minor for adoption, an individual or agency placing the minor, or the individual's agent, must shall compile and provide to the prospective adoptive parent a written document containing all of the following information:
  - (1) The date of the birth of the minor and the minor's weight at birth and any other reasonably available nonidentifying information about the minor that is relevant to the adoption decision or to the minor's development and well-being; well-being.
  - (2) Age of the biological parents in years at the time of the minor's birth; birth.
  - (3) Heritage of the biological parents, which shall consist consisting of nationality, ethnic background, and race; race.
  - (4) Education of the biological parents, which shall be consisting of the number of years of school completed by the biological parents at the time of the minor's birth; and birth.
  - (5) General physical appearance of the biological parents.

In addition, the written document <u>must shall</u> also include all reasonably available nonidentifying information about the health of the minor, the biological parents, and other members of the

biological parents' families that is relevant to the adoption decision or to the minor's health and development. This health-related information shall include each such-individual's present state of physical and mental health, health and genetic histories, and information concerning any history of emotional, physical, sexual, or substance abuse. This health-related information shall also include an account of the prenatal and postnatal care received by the minor. The information described in this subsection, if known, shall, upon written request of the minor, be made available to the minor upon the minor reaching age 18 or upon the minor's marriage or emancipation.

- (b) Information provided under this section, or any information directly or indirectly derived from <u>such-the</u> information, <u>may-shall</u> not be used against the provider or against an individual described in subsection (a) of this section who is the subject of the information in any criminal action or any civil action for damages. In addition, information provided under this section <u>may-shall</u> not be admitted in evidence against the provider or against an individual described in subsection (a) of this section who is the subject of the information in any other action or proceeding.
- (c) The agency placing the minor shall receive and preserve any additional health-related information obtained after the preparation of the document described in subsection (a) of this section.
- (d) The Division shall develop and make available forms designed to collect the information described in subsection (a) of this section. However, forms reasonably equivalent to those provided by the Division may be substituted."

**SECTION 2.(c)** If a provision of this section or its application to a person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect another provision or application that can be given effect without the invalid provision.

**SECTION 2.(d)** The Revisor of Statutes shall cause to be printed, as annotations to the published General Statutes, all relevant portions of the Official Comments to Article 3 of the Uniform Unregulated Child Custody Transfer Act and all explanatory comments of the drafters of this section as the Revisor may deem appropriate.

**SECTION 2.(e)** This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to placement of a minor for adoption beginning 60 days after the effective date of this section.

#### PART III. EFFECTIVE DATE

**SECTION 3.** Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes law.