



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 451

January Session, 2009

Substitute House Bill No. 6486

House of Representatives, April 2, 2009

The Committee on Human Services reported through REP. WALKER of the 93rd Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD AND STRONG FAMILIES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 17b-27a of the general statutes is repealed and the
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2009*):

3 (a) There is established within the Department of Social Services,
4 within available appropriations, the John S. Martinez Fatherhood
5 Initiative. Said initiative shall promote the positive involvement and
6 interaction of fathers with their children with an emphasis on children
7 eligible or formerly eligible for services funded by the temporary
8 assistance for needy families block grant and shall identify those
9 services that effectively encourage and enhance responsible and
10 skillful parenting and those services that increase the ability of fathers
11 to meet the financial and medical needs of their children through
12 employment services and child support enforcement measures. The
13 objectives of the initiative shall be to: (1) Promote public education
14 concerning the financial and emotional responsibilities of fatherhood;

15 (2) assist men in preparation for the legal, financial and emotional
16 responsibilities of fatherhood; (3) promote the establishment of
17 paternity at childbirth; (4) encourage fathers, regardless of marital
18 status, to foster their emotional connection to and financial support of
19 their children; (5) establish support mechanisms for fathers in their
20 relationship with their children, regardless of their marital and
21 financial status; and (6) integrate state and local services available for
22 families.

23 (b) Not later than February 1, 2010, the Commissioner of Social
24 Services shall report to the select committee of the General Assembly
25 having cognizance of matters relating to children, in accordance with
26 the provisions of section 11-4a, regarding (1) the effectiveness of any
27 child support arrears management efforts; (2) the effectiveness of any
28 efforts aimed at reducing teen fatherhood; (3) the number of
29 noncustodial parents participating in job training programs; (4) the
30 number of newly employed noncustodial parents; and (5) the number
31 of noncustodial parents with incomes at or below the federal poverty
32 level.

33 (c) The commissioner shall seek to obtain any available federal and
34 private funds for programs that promote the objectives described in
35 subsection (a) of this section. If such funds are obtained, the
36 commissioner shall award grants to entities for such programs, as
37 provided in subsection (d) of this section.

38 (d) The Department of Social Services shall award grants to entities
39 under this section for programs and services that provide (1)
40 employment and training opportunities for low-income fathers to
41 increase the earning capacity of such fathers; (2) classes in parenting
42 and financial management; and (3) other support services and
43 programs that promote responsible parenting, financial stability and
44 communication and interaction between fathers and their children.

45 (e) Applicants for grants provided pursuant to this section shall
46 apply to the Commissioner of Social Services at such time and in such
47 manner as the commissioner prescribes. The commissioner shall

48 establish criteria for eligibility for grants and for the awarding of
49 grants pursuant to this section. The commissioner shall require a
50 grantee to (1) implement accountability measures and results-based
51 outcomes as a condition of being awarded a grant; and (2) leverage
52 funds through existing resources and collaboration with community-
53 based and nonprofit organizations.

54 (f) Not later than October 1, 2010, and annually thereafter, the
55 commissioner shall report, in accordance with section 11-4a, to the
56 joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance
57 of matters relating to human services and the select committee of the
58 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children on
59 the grant program's effectiveness in achieving the objectives specified
60 in subsection (a) of this section.

61 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2009*) (a) As used in this section,
62 "child support matter" means all actions under chapter 816 of the
63 general statutes.

64 (b) The Chief Court Administrator shall establish, within existing
65 resources, a problem solving docket, in one or more court locations, for
66 the hearing of child support matters separate from dockets for other
67 matters. The Superior Court or the Family Court Magistrate Division
68 may transfer any child support matter to the problem solving docket.
69 The problem solving docket shall provide assistance to noncustodial
70 parents who are in arrears on child support payments.

71 (c) The Chief Court Administrator shall establish policies and
72 procedures to implement the provisions of this section. Not later than
73 July 1, 2010, the Chief Court Administrator shall submit a report, in
74 accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, on such program
75 to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having
76 cognizance of matters relating to human services.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

The following fiscal impact statement and bill analysis are prepared for the benefit of members of the General Assembly, solely for the purpose of information, summarization, and explanation, and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either House thereof for any purpose:

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 10 \$	FY 11 \$
Department of Social Services	GF - Cost	Minimal	Minimal
Judicial Department	GF - See Below	See Below	See Below

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

This bill requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) to report certain information to the General Assembly. It further requires DSS to pursue private and federal funds from which to make grants. These requirements will result in a minimal administrative cost to the department.

The bill further requires the chief court administrator to establish, within available resources, one or more problem-solving dockets to provide assistance to noncustodial parents with child support payment arrearages. Absent additional resources to expand the scope of its duties in accordance with the bill, one of three outcomes could result: (1) the Judicial Department will delay establishment of the dockets pending the approval of additional appropriations to meet this mandate in future fiscal years; (2) the Judicial Department will shift resources from other priorities to establish the dockets, thereby impacting existing programs; or (3) the Judicial Department will not establish the new dockets.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6486

AN ACT CONCERNING RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD AND STRONG FAMILIES.

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) to report to the Children's Committee on child support collection efforts and noncustodial parents. It requires the commissioner to seek federal and private funds to provide grants to promote programs supporting the positive involvement and interaction of fathers with their children.

It requires the chief court administrator to create a problem-solving docket in one or more court locations to hear child support matters separately from other matters.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2009

REPORT

The bill requires the DSS to report to the Children's committee by February 1, 2010 on:

1. the effectiveness of child support arrears management efforts;
2. the effectiveness of efforts aimed at reducing teen fatherhood; and
3. the number of noncustodial parents who are (a) participating in job training programs, (b) newly employed, and (c) at or below federal poverty level.

GRANTS

The DSS commissioner must seek to obtain all available federal and private funding for programs that promote the following objectives:

1. promote public education on the financial responsibility of fatherhood;
2. help men prepare for the legal, financial, and emotional responsibilities of fatherhood;
3. promote the establishment of paternity at childbirth;
4. encourage fathers, regardless of marital status, to foster their emotional connection to and financial support of their children;
5. establish support mechanisms for fathers in their relationship with their children, regardless of their marital and financial status; and
6. integrate state and local services available for families.

If funds are obtained, DSS must award grants to programs and service providers that provide:

1. employment and training opportunities for low-income fathers to increase their earning capacity;
2. classes in parenting and financial management; and
3. other support services and programs that promote responsible parenting, financial stability, and communication and interaction between fathers and their children.

Those seeking grants must apply to the commissioner by a date and in a manner he determines. He will set eligibility and award criteria. He must require applicants to:

1. implement accountability measures and results-based outcomes as a condition of being awarded the grant and
2. leverage funds through existing resources and collaboration with community-based and nonprofit organizations.

Annually, starting October 1, 2010, the commissioner must report to

the Children’s and Human Services committees on the grant program’s effectiveness in achieving the six objectives above.

PROBLEM-SOLVING DOCKET

The chief court administrator must create a problem-solving docket within existing resources to help noncustodial parents with child support payment arrearages. The docket must be established in one or more locations for hearing child support matters separate from other dockets. The Superior Court or family court magistrate division may transfer child support matters to this docket.

The chief court administrator must establish policies and procedures to implement the program. She must report on the program to the Human Services Committee by July 1, 2010.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Select Committee on Children

Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference
Yea 9 Nay 0 (03/03/2009)

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute
Yea 19 Nay 0 (03/19/2009)