
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 912

AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING AND OVERSIGHT OF FATHERHOOD INITIATIVES.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes an office and council to oversee the Department of Social Services' (DSS) fatherhood initiative, which the bill renames as the "Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative" (CFI) (conforming to current practice). The bill correspondingly renames the initiative's current objectives as CFI objectives.

The bill establishes a CFI Council to approve the initiative's work, including implementation of its objectives through a strategic plan the bill requires the initiative to develop. The bill requires the DSS commissioner to consult with the council to perform certain duties required under existing law.

The bill also establishes the Office of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative within DSS. Under the bill, the DSS commissioner oversees the office, which conducts administrative duties for the initiative in accordance with the approved strategic plan.

Existing law requires the DSS commissioner to annually report to the Children's and Human Services committees on the initiative's grant program's effectiveness in achieving the initiative's objectives. The bill changes the deadline for this report from October 1 to December 1 and requires the commissioner to consult with the CFI Council for the report.

Existing law, unchanged by the bill, requires the initiative to promote the positive involvement and interaction of fathers with their children. The bill eliminates a requirement that the initiative identify employment services and child support enforcement measures.

The bill also eliminates an obsolete reporting requirement.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

CFI COUNCIL

Membership, Meetings, and Vacancies

Under the bill, CFI Council membership includes, but is not limited to, the following members or their designees:

1. DSS commissioner,
2. Department of Children and Families commissioner,
3. Department of Correction commissioner,
4. Office of Early Childhood commissioner,
5. State Department of Education commissioner,
6. Department of Developmental Services commissioner,
7. Department of Housing commissioner,
8. Department of Labor commissioner,
9. Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services commissioner,
10. Department of Public Health commissioner,
11. Department of Veterans Affairs commissioner,
12. Pardons and Parole Board chairperson,
13. Judicial Support Enforcement Services executive director,
14. Court Support Services Division executive director,
15. Chief Family Support Magistrate,
16. Connecticut State Colleges and Universities president, and

17. DSS's Office of Child Support Services director.

The bill also requires the DSS commissioner to appoint at least eleven additional members, including the following:

1. an expert in legal assistance for low-income populations,
2. a Connecticut Employment and Training Commission representative,
3. a regional workforce development board representative,
4. a family relations expert,
5. at least one local fatherhood program representative,
6. an expert in male psychology and health,
7. one member each representing interests of custodial and noncustodial parents,
8. a member representing the children's interests,
9. a domestic violence expert, and
10. a child development expert.

The bill requires the DSS commissioner to (1) be a council chairperson, (2) designate a co-chairperson, (3) convene the council within 30 days of the bill's passage, and (4) fill any vacancies on the council. The council must meet at least quarterly.

Working Group

The bill allows the DSS commissioner to designate a working group from among the council's members to carry out specific duties required under the bill. The bill requires the commissioner to seek the advice and participation of any person, organization, or state or federal agency she deems necessary to carry out the bill's provisions.

DSS Consultations

The bill requires the DSS commissioner to consult with the council to perform certain duties required under existing law, including (1) obtaining available federal and private funds for programs that promote the initiative's objectives and (2) establishing eligibility criteria for grants and awarding them.

Duties and Requirements

The bill requires the CFI Council to approve the initiative's work, including implementing CFI objectives by developing a strategic plan. The bill also requires the council to actively participate in efforts that further CFI objectives, including (1) fostering collaboration between state agencies that provide services for fathers and families and (2) seeking opportunities to coordinate comprehensive services to increase the services' impact and avoid service duplication. Under the bill, these efforts also include supporting fathers of children eligible or formerly eligible for services under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant by:

1. assisting needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or in their relatives' homes;
2. promoting needy parents' independence and self-sufficiency by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
3. preventing and reducing incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and
4. encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute
Yea 19 Nay 0 (03/31/2021)