



Senate

General Assembly

File No. 514

January Session, 2021

Substitute Senate Bill No. 912

Senate, April 19, 2021

The Committee on Human Services reported through SEN. MOORE of the 22nd Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING AND OVERSIGHT OF FATHERHOOD INITIATIVES.

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) As used in this section and
2 section 2 of this act, (1) "Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative", or "CFI",
3 means an initiative that (A) promotes the positive involvement and
4 interaction of fathers with their children with an emphasis on children
5 eligible or formerly eligible for services funded under the Temporary
6 Assistance for Needy Families block grant, and (B) identifies services
7 that effectively encourage and enhance responsible and skillful
8 parenting and increase the ability of fathers to meet the financial and
9 emotional needs of their children; and

10 (2) "CFI objectives" means:

11 (A) Promoting public education concerning the financial and
12 emotional responsibilities of fatherhood;

13 (B) Assisting men in preparation for the legal, financial and emotional
14 responsibilities of fatherhood;

15 (C) Promoting the establishment of paternity at childbirth;

16 (D) Encouraging fathers, regardless of marital status, to foster their
17 emotional connection to and financial support of their children;

18 (E) Establishing support mechanisms for fathers in their relationship
19 with their children, regardless of their marital and financial status; and

20 (F) Integrating state and local services available for families.

21 (b) There is established within the Department of Social Services the
22 Office of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative. The office shall be
23 overseen by the Commissioner of Social Services and shall perform
24 administrative duties on behalf of the CFI in accordance with a strategic
25 plan developed and implemented by the CFI with the approval of the
26 council established pursuant to section 2 of this act.

27 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a CFI
28 Council to approve the work of the CFI, including, but not limited to,
29 implementation of CFI objectives through a strategic plan developed by
30 the CFI. The council shall actively participate in efforts that further CFI
31 objectives, including, but not limited to, (1) fostering collaboration
32 between state agencies that provide services for fathers and families; (2)
33 seeking opportunities to coordinate comprehensive services, ensuring
34 the continuity of services, heightening the impact of services and
35 avoiding duplication of services; and (3) supporting fathers of children
36 eligible or formerly eligible for services under the Temporary Assistance
37 for Needy Families block grant, including, but not limited to: (A)
38 Providing assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for
39 in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (B) promoting the
40 independence and self-sufficiency of needy parents by promoting job
41 preparation, work and marriage; (C) preventing and reducing the
42 incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and (D) encouraging the
43 formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

44 (b) The membership of the council shall include, but need not be
45 limited to:

46 (1) The Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's
47 designee;

48 (2) The Commissioner of Children and Families, or the
49 commissioner's designee;

50 (3) The Commissioner of Correction, or the commissioner's designee;

51 (4) The Commissioner of Early Childhood, or the commissioner's
52 designee;

53 (5) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee;

54 (6) The Commissioner of Developmental Services, or the
55 commissioner's designee;

56 (7) The Commissioner of Housing, or the commissioner's designee;

57 (8) The Labor Commissioner, or the commissioner's designee;

58 (9) The Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or
59 the commissioner's designee;

60 (10) The Commissioner of Public Health, or the commissioner's
61 designee;

62 (11) The commissioner of Veterans Affairs, or the commissioner's
63 designee;

64 (12) The chairperson of the Board of Pardons and Parole, or the
65 chairperson's designee;

66 (13) The executive directors of the Support Enforcement Services
67 Division and the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch,
68 or their respective designees;

69 (14) The Chief Family Support Magistrate, or the Chief Family

70 Support Magistrate's designee;

71 (15) The president of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities,
72 or the president's designee;

73 (16) The director of the Office of Child Support Services within the
74 Department of Social Services, or the director's designee; and

75 (17) At least eleven members appointed by the Commissioner of
76 Social Services, including:

77 (A) One with expertise in the area of legal assistance to low-income
78 populations;

79 (B) One representative of the Connecticut Employment and Training
80 Commission;

81 (C) One representative of a regional workforce development board;

82 (D) One member with expertise in family relations;

83 (E) One or more representatives of a local fatherhood program;

84 (F) One member with expertise in male psychology and health;

85 (G) One member representing the interests of custodial parents;

86 (H) One member representing the interests of noncustodial parents;

87 (I) One member representing the interests of children;

88 (J) One member with expertise in the area of domestic violence; and

89 (K) One member with expertise in child development.

90 (c) The Commissioner of Social Services shall serve as a chairperson
91 of the council and shall designate a second cochairperson from among
92 the membership of the council. The commissioner shall convene the
93 council not later than thirty days after the effective date of this section,
94 and the council shall meet at least quarterly thereafter. The

95 commissioner shall fill any vacancy on the council.

96 (d) The Commissioner of Social Services may designate a working
97 group from among the members of the council to carry out specific
98 duties required under this section and section 1 of this act. The
99 commissioner shall seek the advice and participation of any person,
100 organization or state or federal agency the commissioner deems
101 necessary to carry out the provisions of this section and section 1 of this
102 act.

103 (e) The Commissioner of Social Services, in consultation with the
104 council and within available resources, shall apply for any available
105 federal and private funds for programs that promote CFI objectives in
106 accordance with this section and section 1 of this act. The commissioner
107 shall award grants from any such available funds to entities that provide
108 (1) employment and training opportunities for low-income fathers to
109 increase the earning capacity of such fathers; (2) classes in parenting and
110 financial literacy; and (3) other support services and programs that
111 promote responsible parenting, economic stability and communication
112 and interaction between fathers and their children.

113 (f) Applicants for grants provided pursuant to subsection (e) of this
114 section shall apply to the Commissioner of Social Services at such time
115 and in such manner as prescribed by the commissioner. The
116 commissioner shall, in consultation with the council, establish criteria
117 for eligibility for grants and for the awarding of grants. At a minimum,
118 the commissioner shall require grantees to (1) implement accountability
119 measures and results-based outcomes as a condition of being awarded
120 a grant; (2) leverage funds through existing resources and collaboration
121 with community-based and nonprofit organizations; and (3) consult
122 with experts in domestic violence to ensure that, when appropriate, the
123 programs and services provided to fathers and families pursuant to this
124 section and section 1 of this act address issues concerning domestic
125 violence.

126 (g) Not later than December 1, 2021, and annually thereafter, the
127 commissioner, in consultation with the council, shall report, in

128 accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint
 129 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of
 130 matters relating to human services and children on the grant program's
 131 effectiveness in achieving CFI objectives.

132 Sec. 3. Section 17b-27a of the general statutes is repealed. (*Effective*
 133 *from passage*)

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>from passage</i>	Repealer section

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

In Section 2(a)(3), "block grant program" was changed to "block grant" for internal consistency.

HS *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note**State Impact:** None**Municipal Impact:** None**Explanation**

The bill (1) establishes a Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council to approve the initiative's work, (2) establishes the Office of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative within the Department of Social Services (DSS), and (3) makes other technical and conforming changes that have no fiscal impact.

The Out Years**State Impact:** None**Municipal Impact:** None

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)