



Senate

General Assembly

File No. 243

February Session, 2022

Substitute Senate Bill No. 289

Senate, March 31, 2022

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 OVERSIGHT AND FUNDING OF THE CONNECTICUT FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE.

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 from low-income families, and (B) identifies services that effectively
6 encourage and enhance responsible and skillful parenting and increase
7 the ability of fathers to meet the financial and emotional needs of their
8 children; and (2) "CFI objectives" means efforts to: (A) Promote public
9 education concerning the financial and emotional responsibilities of
10 fatherhood, (B) assist men in preparation for the legal, financial and
11 emotional responsibilities of fatherhood, (C) promote the establishment
12 of paternity at childbirth, (D) encourage fathers, regardless of marital
13 status, to foster their emotional connection to and financial support of
14 their children, (E) establish support mechanisms for fathers in their

15 relationship with their children, regardless of their marital and financial
16 status, and (F) integrate state and local services available for families.

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

23 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a CFI
24 Council to approve the work of the CFI, including, but not limited to,
25 implementation of CFI objectives through a strategic plan developed by
26 the CFI. The council shall actively participate in efforts that further CFI
27 objectives, including, but not limited to: (1) Fostering collaboration
28 between state agencies that provide services for fathers and families; (2)
29 (A) coordinating comprehensive services, (B) ensuring the continuity of
30 services, (C) heightening the impact of services, and (D) avoiding
31 duplication of services; and (3) supporting fathers of children eligible or
32 formerly eligible for services under the temporary assistance for needy
33 families block grant.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

52 (11) The Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, or the commissioner's
53 designee;

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

56 (13) The executive director of the Support Enforcement Services
57 Division and the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch,
58 or their designees;

59 (14) The Chief Family Support Magistrate, or the Chief Family
60 Support Magistrate's designee;

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

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

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

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

69 (B) One representative of the Governor's Workforce Council;

- 70 (C) One representative of a regional workforce development board;
- 71 (D) One member with expertise in family relations;
- 72 (E) One or more representatives of a local fatherhood program;
- 73 (F) One member with expertise in male mental and physical health;
- 74 (G) One member representing the interests of custodial parents;
- 75 (H) One member representing the interests of noncustodial parents;
- 76 (I) One member representing the interests of children;
- 77 (J) One member with expertise in the area of domestic violence; and
- 78 (K) One member with expertise in child development.

79 (c) The Commissioner of Social Services shall serve as a chairperson
80 of the council and shall designate a cochairperson from among the
81 membership of the council. The commissioner shall convene the council
82 not later than thirty days after the effective date of this section, and the
83 council shall meet at least quarterly thereafter. The commissioner shall
84 fill any vacancy on the council.

85 (d) The Commissioner of Social Services may designate a working
86 group from among the members of the council to carry out specific
87 duties required under this section and section 1 of this act. The
88 commissioner shall seek the advice and participation of any person,
89 organization or state or federal agency the commissioner deems
90 necessary to carry out the provisions of this section and section 1 of this
91 act.

92 (e) The Commissioner of Social Services, in consultation with the
93 council and within available resources, shall apply for any available
94 federal and private funds for programs that promote CFI objectives in
95 accordance with this section and section 1 of this act. The commissioner
96 shall award grants from any such available funds to entities that provide
97 (1) employment and training opportunities for low-income fathers to

98 increase the earning capacity of such fathers; (2) classes in parenting and
99 financial literacy; and (3) other support services and programs that
100 promote responsible parenting, economic stability and communication
101 and interaction between fathers and their children.

102 (f) Applicants for grants provided pursuant to subsection (e) of this
103 section shall apply to the Commissioner of Social Services at such time
104 and in such manner as prescribed by the commissioner. The
105 commissioner shall, in consultation with the council, establish criteria
106 for eligibility for grants and for the awarding of grants. At a minimum,
107 the commissioner shall require grantees to (1) implement accountability
108 measures and results-based outcomes as a condition of being awarded
109 a grant; (2) leverage funds through existing resources and collaboration
110 with community-based and nonprofit organizations; and (3) consult
111 with experts in domestic violence to ensure that, when appropriate, the
112 programs and services provided to fathers and families pursuant to this
113 section and section 1 of this act address issues concerning domestic
114 violence.

115 (g) Not later than December 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the
116 commissioner, in consultation with the council, shall report, in
117 accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint
118 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of
119 matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies,
120 human services and children on the grant program's effectiveness in
121 achieving CFI objectives.

122 Sec. 3. Section 17b-27a of the general statutes is repealed. (*Effective*
123 *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(1)(a)(1)(A), "low income children" was changed to "children from low-income families" for clarity; and in Section 2(b)(17)(B), "Connecticut Employment and Training Commission" was changed to "Governor's Workforce Council" for accuracy.

HS *Joint Favorable Subst. -LCO*

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**SB 289*****AN ACT CONCERNING OVERSIGHT AND FUNDING OF THE CONNECTICUT FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE.*****SUMMARY**

This bill repeals the John S. Martinez Fatherhood Initiative under current law and replaces it with the “Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative” or “CFI” with the same or similar purposes and objectives. It also establishes a (1) council to provide general oversight of the initiative, generally codifying existing practice, and (2) dedicated office within the Department of Social Services (DSS) for administrative support.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

INITIATIVE ORGANIZATION AND OBJECTIVES

Whereas the current initiative was established within available appropriations under DSS, the bill creates the Office of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative within DSS to be overseen by its commissioner. Although its funding is unspecified, this new office must perform administrative duties on CFI’s behalf in accordance with a strategic plan that the initiative develops and implements with the council’s approval.

In comparison to the current initiative’s emphasis on children eligible or formerly eligible for services funded by the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant (i.e., Temporary Family Assistance, the state’s cash assistance program for low-income families), the new initiative broadens this emphasis to children from low-income families, regardless of their eligibility for TANF-funded services. The bill also partially changes the new initiative’s charge. Whereas the current initiative must identify certain services, including those that increase the ability of fathers to meet the financial and medical needs of their children through employment services and child support

enforcement measures, the new initiative must instead identify services that increase fathers’ abilities to meet their children’s financial and emotional needs.

COUNCIL OVERSIGHT

The bill establishes a CFI Council to approve the initiative’s work, including implementing objectives through a strategic plan the initiative develops. It requires the council to actively participate in efforts that further these objectives, including: (1) fostering collaboration between state agencies that provide services for fathers and families; (2) coordinating comprehensive services, ensuring their continuity, heightening their impact, and avoiding duplication; and (3) supporting fathers of children eligible, or formerly eligible, for TANF-funded services.

The council is composed of a minimum of 28 members as outlined below in Table 1. The DSS Commissioner serves as a council chair, designates a co-chair from among the membership, and fills any vacancies.

Table 1: CFI Council Membership

<i>Ex-Officio Members (or Designees)</i>	<i>DSS Commissioner Appointments</i>
Commissioners of: children and families, correction, developmental services, early childhood, education, housing, labor, mental health and addiction services, public health, social services, and veterans affairs	Five members, each with expertise in one of the following areas: (1) legal assistance to low-income populations, (2) family relations, (3) male mental and physical health, (4) domestic violence, and (5) child development
Board of Pardons and Parole Chairperson	One or more representatives of local fatherhood programs
Executive directors of the Court Support Services and Support Enforcement Services divisions of the judicial branch	Three members, each representing the interests of one of the following stakeholders: (1) custodial parents, (2) noncustodial parents, and (3) children
Chief Family Support Magistrate	Governor’s Workforce Council representative
President of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities	Regional workforce development board representative

<i>Ex-Officio Members (or Designees)</i>	<i>DSS Commissioner Appointments</i>
Director of DSS's Office of Child Support Services	

The bill requires the DSS commissioner to convene the council within 30 days after its passage, and then they must continue to meet at least quarterly. It also authorizes her to (1) designate a working group of council members to carry out specific required duties and (2) seek the advice and participation of any person, organization, or state or federal agency she deems necessary to carry out its provisions.

INITIATIVE FUNDING & REPORTING

Current law requires the DSS commissioner, within available resources, to apply for any available federal and private funds for programs that promote the initiative’s objectives. Under the bill, she must consult with the council when doing so. It requires her to consult with the council when establishing grant eligibility and use the same minimum criteria and requirements as under current law to (1) award grants from any of these available funds and (2) condition their receipt.

Under current law, the commissioner must annually report to the Children and Human Services committees on the grant program’s effectiveness in achieving initiative objectives. Starting by December 1, 2022, the bill requires her to annually do so in consultation with the council and to also report to the Appropriations Committee.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable
 Yea 20 Nay 0 (03/17/2022)