



General Assembly

February Session, 2022

Substitute Bill No. 289



**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*