General Assembly

Raised Bill No. 7102

January Session, 2025

LCO No. **5240**

Referred to Committee on HUMAN SERVICES

Introduced by:
(HS)

AN ACT CONCERNING MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH CARE.

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

Section 1. (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) As used in this section, (1) "birth center" has the same meaning as provided in section 19a-490 of the general statutes, and (2) "birthing hospital" has the same meaning as provided in section 19a-490ee of the general statutes. The Commissioner of Health Strategy, in consultation with the Commissioners of Social Services and Public Health, shall develop a strategic plan to increase the number of birth centers and birthing hospitals located in areas of the state with a high percentage of Medicaid recipients and limited access to birth centers and birthing hospitals.

(b) The strategic plan developed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall include (1) barriers to opening birth centers and birthing hospitals, (2) incentives that may be offered by the state to facilitate the opening of more such centers and hospitals, and (3) an evaluation of best practices nation-wide to facilitate the opening and sustainability of such centers and hospitals.

(c) Not later than December 1, 2025, the Commissioner of Health Strategy shall file a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, with the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies, human services and public health. The report shall include recommendations and an estimate of any state appropriations that may be needed to facilitate the opening of more birth centers and birthing hospitals in underserved areas of the state.

Sec. 2. (*Effective July 1, 2025*) The Commissioner of Social Services, within available appropriations, shall increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for doulas as part of the bundled payment for maternity services established pursuant to section 17b-277d of the general statutes. Not later than December 1, 2025, the commissioner shall file a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, with the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies, public health and human services on (1) any increase in Medicaid reimbursement rates for doulas, and (2) the impact on the number of doulas providing care to Medicaid recipients.

Sec. 3. Section 17b-27c of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(a) There is established a CFI Council to approve the work of the CFI, including, but not limited to, implementation of CFI objectives through a strategic plan developed by the CFI. The council shall actively participate in efforts that further CFI objectives, including, but not limited to: (1) Fostering collaboration between state agencies that provide services for fathers and families; (2) (A) coordinating comprehensive services, (B) ensuring the continuity of services, (C) heightening the impact of services, and (D) avoiding duplication of services; **[**and**]** (3) supporting fathers of children eligible or formerly eligible for services under the temporary assistance for needy families

block grant; and (4) expanding the role of fathers in supporting maternal health.

(b) The membership of the council shall consist of:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(13) The director of the Support Enforcement Services Division and the executive director of the Court Support Services Division of the

Judicial Branch, or their designees;

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

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

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

(17) Eleven members appointed by the Commissioner of Social Services, including:

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

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

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

(D) One member with expertise in family relations;

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

(F) One member with expertise in male mental and physical health;

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

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

(I) One member representing the interests of children;

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

(K) One member with expertise in child development.

(c) The Commissioner of Social Services shall serve as a chairperson of the council and shall designate a cochairperson from among the

membership of the council. The commissioner shall convene the council not later than June 26, 2022, and the council shall meet at least quarterly thereafter. The commissioner shall fill any vacancy of seats under subdivision (17) of subsection (b) of this section.

(d) The Commissioner of Social Services may designate a working group from among the members of the council to carry out specific duties required under this section and section 17b-27b. The commissioner shall seek the advice and participation of any person, organization or state or federal agency the commissioner deems necessary to carry out the provisions of this section and section 17b-27b.

(e) The Commissioner of Social Services, in consultation with the council and within available resources, shall apply for any available federal and private funds for programs that promote CFI objectives in accordance with this section and section 17b-27b. The commissioner shall award grants from any such available funds to entities that provide (1) employment and training opportunities for low-income fathers to increase the earning capacity of such fathers; (2) classes in parenting and financial literacy; and (3) other support services and programs that promote responsible parenting, <u>expanding the role of fathers in supporting maternal health,</u> economic stability and communication and interaction between fathers and their children.

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

section and section 17b-27b address issues concerning domestic violence.

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

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 2	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 3	*July 1, 2025*	17b-27c

Statement of Purpose:

To develop a strategy to increase birth centers and birthing hospitals in underserved regions of the state with a high percentage of Medicaid recipients, increase Medicaid reimbursement for doulas and expand the role of fathers in supporting maternal and infant health.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]