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By: **Delegates Rosenberg and Haynes**  
Introduced and read first time: February 11, 2005  
Assigned to: Health and Government Operations

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Building Strong Families Act of 2005**

3 FOR the purpose of changing the name of the Commission on Responsible Fatherhood  
4 to the Maryland Commission on Fathers and Families; altering the purpose and  
5 duties of the Commission; establishing the Healthy Relationships and Marriage  
6 Program administered by the Department of Human Resources; establishing  
7 the purpose of the Program; establishing the Healthy Relationships and  
8 Marriage Fund; establishing the purpose of the Fund; establishing that the  
9 Fund consists of certain moneys; authorizing certain entities to apply for certain  
10 grants; requiring certain program proposals to contain certain plans and  
11 descriptions; requiring certain entities that receive certain funding to provide  
12 domestic violence counseling services; establishing certain responsibilities of the  
13 Department in administering the Program; requiring the Department to submit  
14 a certain annual report; defining certain terms; and generally relating to the  
15 Maryland Commission on Fathers and Families and establishing the Healthy  
16 Relationships and Marriage Program and the Healthy Relationships and  
17 Marriage Fund.

18 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
19 Article 41 - Governor - Executive and Administrative Departments  
20 Section 18-401, 18-402, 18-406, and 18-407 to be under the amended subtitle  
21 "Subtitle 4. Maryland Commission on Fathers and Families"  
22 Annotated Code of Maryland  
23 (2003 Replacement Volume and 2004 Supplement)

24 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,  
25 Article 41 - Governor - Executive and Administrative Departments  
26 Section 18-403, 18-404, 18-405, and 18-408  
27 Annotated Code of Maryland  
28 (2003 Replacement Volume and 2004 Supplement)

29 BY adding to  
30 Article 88A - Department of Human Resources  
31 Section 146 through 152, inclusive, to be under the new subtitle "Healthy

1 Relationships and Marriage Program"  
2 Annotated Code of Maryland  
3 (2003 Replacement Volume and 2004 Supplement)

4 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
5 MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

6 **Article 41 - Governor - Executive and Administrative Departments**

7 Subtitle 4. [Commission on Responsible Fatherhood] MARYLAND COMMISSION ON  
8 FATHERS AND FAMILIES.

9 18-401.

10 In this subtitle "Commission" means the [Commission on Responsible  
11 Fatherhood] MARYLAND COMMISSION ON FATHERS AND FAMILIES.

12 18-402.

13 (a) There is a [Commission on Responsible Fatherhood] MARYLAND  
14 COMMISSION ON FATHERS AND FAMILIES.

15 (b) The Commission shall be independent and located in the Department of  
16 Human Resources Child Support Enforcement Administration for budgetary and  
17 administrative purposes only.

18 18-403.

19 (a) The Commission consists of the following 18 members appointed by the  
20 Governor:

21 (1) The Secretary of Human Resources;

22 (2) The Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene;

23 (3) The Secretary of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation;

24 (4) The Secretary of Budget and Management;

25 (5) The State Superintendent of Schools;

26 (6) The Special Secretary of the Office for Children, Youth, and Families;

27 (7) One judge assigned to the Family Division of a circuit court  
28 nominated by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals;

29 (8) One member of the Senate of Maryland nominated by the President  
30 of the Senate;

1 (9) One member of the House of Delegates of Maryland nominated by the  
2 Speaker of the House;

3 (10) Three persons with extensive programmatic or academic experience  
4 with noncustodial fathers and their children;

5 (11) Three persons including representatives of community, parent, or  
6 religious groups or organizations who have interest or expertise in matters pertaining  
7 to noncustodial fathers and their children;

8 (12) Two representatives of local government in areas with a significant  
9 incidence of noncustodial fathers; and

10 (13) One noncustodial father.

11 (b) (1) The term of a member appointed pursuant to subsection (a)(10), (11),  
12 and (12) of this section shall be 3 years.

13 (2) The terms of the members appointed pursuant to subsection (a)(13) of  
14 this section shall be 2 years.

15 (3) The terms of members appointed pursuant to subsection (a)(10), (11),  
16 (12), and (13) of this section shall be staggered.

17 (4) At the end of a term, a member shall continue to serve until a  
18 successor is appointed and qualifies.

19 (5) A member who is appointed pursuant to subsection (a)(10), (11), (12),  
20 or (13) of this section after a term has begun shall serve only for the rest of the term  
21 or until a successor is appointed.

22 (c) The Governor shall appoint a successor in the event of a vacancy on the  
23 Commission.

24 (d) A member of the Commission:

25 (1) May not receive compensation; but

26 (2) Is entitled to reimbursement for reasonable expenses incurred in the  
27 performance of Commission duties, in accordance with Standard State Travel  
28 Regulations and as provided in the State budget.

29 (e) From among the members of the Commission, the Governor shall  
30 designate a chairman for a 2-year term.

31 18-404.

32 (a) A majority of the members then serving on the Commission is a quorum.

1 (b) A member appointed under § 18-403(a)(1) through (6) of this subtitle may  
2 in writing designate an alternate to represent the member of the Commission and  
3 exercise the member's power to vote.

4 (c) The Commission shall determine the times and places of its meetings and  
5 any other necessary operating procedures, including the establishment of  
6 subcommittees or work groups utilizing the expertise of noncommission members.

7 18-405.

8 (a) The Commission shall hire a staff director, subject to the approval of the  
9 Governor, and as provided in the State budget.

10 (b) The staff director, subject to the advice and consent of the chairman of the  
11 Commission, shall hire such additional staff as provided for in the State budget to  
12 perform such duties as are deemed appropriate by the Commission.

13 (c) The staff shall be responsible to the Secretary of Human Resources solely  
14 for routine administrative purposes.

15 (d) Members of the Commission may designate staff from their respective  
16 constituent agencies to assist the Commission.

17 18-406.

18 The purpose of the Commission is to:

19 (1) Raise awareness of the problems created when a child is raised  
20 without the presence of a responsible father;

21 (2) Identify obstacles that impede or prevent the involvement of  
22 responsible fathers in the lives of their children; and

23 (3) Identify strategies that encourage responsible fatherhood AND  
24 HEALTHY MARITAL AND NONMARITAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BIOLOGICAL  
25 PARENTS.

26 18-407.

27 (a) The Commission shall conduct a thorough examination of the extent and  
28 implications of [the absence of responsible fathers from families] SINGLE PARENT  
29 FAMILIES AND THE BENEFITS OF HEALTHY MARITAL AND NONMARITAL  
30 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BIOLOGICAL PARENTS and in doing so, shall:

31 (1) Hold hearings at which persons, organizations, and agencies with an  
32 interest in responsible fatherhood may present their views;

33 (2) Conduct meetings, discussions, and examinations as necessary to  
34 gather information on the laws and services relating to responsible fatherhood,  
35 HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS, AND MARRIAGE in Maryland and other states;

1 (3) Identify [and examine the limitations and problems associated with  
2 existing laws, programs, and services related to responsible fatherhood] OBSTACLES  
3 THAT IMPEDE OR PREVENT THE FORMATION AND MAINTENANCE OF TWO-PARENT  
4 FAMILIES AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF RESPONSIBLE FATHERS IN THE LIVES OF  
5 THEIR CHILDREN;

6 (4) IDENTIFY STRATEGIES THAT ARE SUCCESSFUL IN ENCOURAGING  
7 RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD AND PROMOTING STRONG AND HEALTHY MARITAL AND  
8 NONMARITAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BIOLOGICAL PARENTS; and

9 [(4)] (5) Examine the financing and delivery of services related to  
10 PROMOTING responsible fatherhood AND STRENGTHENING MARITAL AND  
11 NONMARITAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BIOLOGICAL PARENTS;

12 (b) The Commission shall:

13 (1) Be a strong advocate in ensuring the development of a coordinated  
14 and comprehensive approach to the social, educational, economic, health, and legal  
15 problems [of] THAT IMPACT responsible fatherhood AND THE ABILITY OF  
16 BIOLOGICAL PARENTS TO MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS AND FORM FAMILIES;

17 (2) In cooperation with appropriate State and local agencies, foster plans  
18 to enhance the coordination of all federally or State funded programs and services  
19 regarding responsible fatherhood, HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS, AND MARRIAGE in  
20 accordance with State and federal law;

21 (3) Develop a coordinated comprehensive statewide plan, including  
22 estimates of necessary public and private, State and local funding, for increasing a  
23 father's participation in raising his children, ENCOURAGING HEALTHY  
24 RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE BETWEEN BIOLOGICAL PARENTS, and improving  
25 services to noncustodial fathers AND UNMARRIED PARENTS;

26 (4) Promote interdepartmental and public and private policy, and  
27 program collaboration and coordination;

28 (5) Collect data and perform analysis on ongoing and new efforts aimed  
29 at increasing responsible fatherhood AND ENCOURAGING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS  
30 AND MARRIAGE;

31 (6) Promote the development of statewide policies designed to address  
32 issues [where] THAT LIMIT fathers [are prevented] from participating in raising  
33 their children AND THE ABILITY OF BIOLOGICAL PARENTS TO BUILD HEALTHY  
34 RELATIONSHIPS AND CONSIDER MARRIAGE, WHEN APPROPRIATE;

35 (7) Monitor statewide progress towards the goal of reducing the number  
36 of noncustodial fathers;

37 (8) Promote and encourage wide community input, communication, and  
38 education regarding responsible fatherhood, HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS, AND  
39 MARRIAGE;

1 (9) Provide advice to local public and private agencies seeking to  
2 mobilize local efforts designed to promote responsible fatherhood AND ENCOURAGE  
3 HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE; and

4 (10) In accordance with the statewide plan, recommend to the Governor  
5 distribution of community incentive grants concerning responsible fatherhood,  
6 HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS, AND MARRIAGE from funds provided in the State budget  
7 for this purpose, or from FEDERAL grants or private donations, giving priority to  
8 innovative projects that:

9 (i) Promote the establishment of a coordinated network of services  
10 for noncustodial fathers AND UNMARRIED BIOLOGICAL PARENTS; and

11 (ii) Demonstrate a high level of commitment to the project by  
12 making available nonstate funds, personnel, and facilities.

13 18-408.

14 The Commission may not operate any programs or provide any direct services.

15 **Article 88A - Department of Human Resources**

16 **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE PROGRAM**

17 146.

18 (A) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS  
19 INDICATED.

20 (B) "DEPARTMENT" MEANS THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES.

21 (C) "FUND" MEANS THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE FUND.

22 147.

23 (A) THERE IS A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE PROGRAM  
24 ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

25 (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE  
26 PROGRAM IS TO:

27 (1) IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE MARYLAND  
28 COMMISSION ON FATHERS AND FAMILIES UNDER ARTICLE 41, SUBTITLE 4 OF THE  
29 CODE;

30 (2) PROVIDE FUNDING TO ELIGIBLE COMMUNITY-BASED  
31 ORGANIZATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE  
32 PROGRAMS;

33 (3) ADMINISTER FEDERAL MARRIAGE FUNDS;

1 (4) USE FEDERAL FUNDS TO IMPLEMENT A PROGRAM TO INFORM THE  
2 COMMUNITY OF THE BENEFITS TO CHILDREN WHEN FATHERS ARE ACTIVELY  
3 ENGAGED IN THEIR LIVES AND WHEN THEY ARE REARED IN TWO-PARENT HOMES  
4 THAT ARE FREE FROM VIOLENCE; AND

5 (5) DEVELOP OTHER PROGRAMS CONCERNING HEALTHY  
6 RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE BETWEEN BIOLOGICAL PARENTS, ACCORDING TO  
7 LOCAL NEED.

8 148.

9 (A) THERE IS A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE FUND IN THE  
10 DEPARTMENT.

11 (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE FUND IS TO IMPLEMENT HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS  
12 AND MARRIAGE PROGRAMS.

13 (C) THE FUND CONSISTS OF:

14 (1) MONEY APPROPRIATED IN THE STATE BUDGET TO THE FUND; AND

15 (2) ANY OTHER MONEY FROM ANY OTHER SOURCE ACCEPTED FOR THE  
16 BENEFIT OF THE FUND.

17 149.

18 (A) AN ENTITY MAY APPLY FOR A GRANT FOR A PROGRAM THAT PROMOTES A  
19 PURPOSE UNDER § 147 OF THIS SUBTITLE FOR ANY FISCAL YEAR BY SUBMITTING A  
20 PROGRAM PROPOSAL TO THE DEPARTMENT ON OR BEFORE MAY 1.

21 (B) A PROGRAM PROPOSAL SHALL CONTAIN:

22 (1) A PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM OR A DESCRIPTION OF  
23 AN EXISTING PROGRAM;

24 (2) A PLAN TO ADOPT A CURRICULUM FOR THE PROGRAM;

25 (3) A DESCRIPTION OF ANY MODEL CURRICULUM THAT THE ENTITY  
26 PLANS TO USE FOR THE PROGRAM; AND

27 (4) A PLAN TO INCORPORATE DISCUSSIONS OF FAMILY LAW AND  
28 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISSUES INTO THE CURRICULUM.

29 150.

30 THE DEPARTMENT SHALL:

31 (1) REVIEW PLANS SUBMITTED BY ENTITIES FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE  
32 HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE PROGRAM AND DETERMINE WHICH  
33 ENTITIES ARE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE FUNDS;

- 1 (2) REVIEW RENEWAL APPLICATIONS FROM PARTICIPATING ENTITIES;  
2 AND
- 3 (3) DISTRIBUTE GRANTS TO ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.
- 4 151.

5 AN ENTITY THAT RECEIVES FUNDING UNDER THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS  
6 AND MARRIAGE PROGRAM OR UNDER THE FEDERAL HEALTHY MARRIAGE INITIATIVE  
7 SHALL ENSURE THAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNSELING SERVICES ARE PROVIDED  
8 TO INDIVIDUALS IN THE ENTITY'S PROGRAM.

9 152.

10 NOTHING IN THIS SUBTITLE PREVENTS AN ENTITY FROM OBTAINING FUNDING  
11 FROM A PRIVATE SOURCE.

12 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Department of  
13 Human Resources shall report to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and the  
14 House Appropriations Committee on or before July 1 of each year, in accordance with  
15 § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, on the healthy relationships and marriage  
16 programs granted funding under this Act, including an evaluation of the effectiveness  
17 of the programs in promoting marriage in the State.

18 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Governor shall  
19 include at least \$250,000 in the fiscal year 2006 State budget and each fiscal year  
20 thereafter, to be directed to the Healthy Relationships and Marriage Fund.

21 SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
22 July 1, 2005.