

## Chapter 367

(House Bill 333)

AN ACT concerning

### **Family Investment Program – Couples Advancing Together Pilot Program**

FOR the purpose of requiring the Secretary of Human Resources to establish the Couples Advancing Together Pilot Program in the Department of Human Resources; requiring the Program to be established for a certain number of couples in at least a certain number of counties in the State in order to assist the participating couples to move toward stable relationships and family friendly employment; requiring the Secretary to cooperate with certain local directors of social services and to consult with the Commission on Responsible Fatherhood regarding the establishment of the Program; establishing the intent of the Program; providing for the components of the Program including the implementation of certain policies and procedures in certain local departments, the development of a certain referral process or certain integrated partnerships for certain couples, and the implementation of certain program requirements; establishing certain age requirements for eligibility to participate in the Program; requiring the Secretary to attempt to access certain federal grants and funds; requiring the Secretary to submit a certain annual report to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations Committee; providing for the contents of the annual report; requiring the Secretary to submit a certain report to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations Committee on the Department's efforts to secure certain federal grants and funds; defining a certain term; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Couples Advancing Together Pilot Program and the Family Investment Program.

BY adding to

Article – Human Services

Section 5–318.1

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2007 Volume and 2011 Supplement)

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

### **Article – Human Services**

**5–318.1.**

**(A) IN THIS SECTION, “PROGRAM” MEANS THE COUPLES ADVANCING TOGETHER PILOT PROGRAM IN THE DEPARTMENT.**

**(B) (1) IN COOPERATION WITH THE LOCAL DIRECTORS AND IN CONSULTATION WITH THE COMMISSION ON RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD, THE SECRETARY SHALL ESTABLISH A COUPLES ADVANCING TOGETHER PILOT PROGRAM.**

**(2) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO ASSIST 100 COUPLES THAT QUALIFY AS A FAMILY ELIGIBLE FOR THE FIP TO MOVE TOWARD STABLE RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY FRIENDLY EMPLOYMENT, FOR ONE OR BOTH ~~PARTNERS~~ PARENTS OF A CHILD WHO RESIDES WITH THE FAMILY, IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THEIR ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES AND PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR LASTING FAMILY UNITS.**

**(3) THE PROGRAM SHALL BE ESTABLISHED IN AT LEAST THREE COUNTIES.**

**(C) THE PROGRAM SHALL INCLUDE, IN ADDITION TO THE FIP REQUIREMENTS FOR RECIPIENTS UNDER § 5-309(B) OF THIS SUBTITLE:**

**(1) IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT THAT ENCOURAGE INCREASED PARTICIPATION OF FATHERS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS FOR DETERMINING THE ELIGIBILITY OF A FAMILY OR CUSTODIAL PARENT FOR FIP BENEFITS, INCLUDING TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE, UNLESS THE DEPARTMENT HAS REASON TO BELIEVE THE FATHER HAS A HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE;**

**(2) DEVELOPMENT OF A LOCAL DEPARTMENT REFERRAL PROCESS OR INTEGRATED PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER LOCAL OR STATE AGENCIES THROUGH WHICH COUPLES MAY JOINTLY ACCESS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES THAT TARGET ECONOMIC STABILITY, HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS, AND PARENTING; AND**

**(3) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS UNDER SUBSECTION (D) OF THIS SECTION.**

**(D) (1) THE PROGRAM SHALL INCLUDE A 6-WEEK PARTICIPATION PERIOD DURING WHICH COUPLES RECEIVE EDUCATION ON, AND ARE PROVIDED WITH THE TOOLS NEEDED FOR, ACHIEVING SUCCESS AT HOME, IN THE WORKPLACE, AND IN SOCIETY.**

**(2) WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS IDENTIFIED BY THE SECRETARY AND LOCAL DIRECTORS, COUPLES SHALL:**

- (I) DEVELOP A WRITTEN FAMILY-FOCUSED CAREER PLAN;**
- (II) LEARN SKILLS THAT ARE REQUIRED TO COMPETE IN THE JOB MARKET; AND**
- (III) ATTEND COUPLES-FOCUSED GROUP SESSIONS THAT:**
  - 1. TEACH SKILLS IN EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCIAL LITERACY;**
  - 2. AID COUPLES IN ACHIEVING ECONOMIC STABILITY; AND**
  - 3. BUILD HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.**

**(E) TO BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM, AN INDIVIDUAL MUST BE AN ADULT UNDER THE AGE OF 36 YEARS.**

**(F) IN ADDITION TO ANY OTHER FUNDS AVAILABLE TO FUND THE PROGRAM, THE SECRETARY SHALL ATTEMPT TO ACCESS FUNDS FROM:**

- (1) DISCRETIONARY GRANTS AVAILABLE FROM THE FEDERAL OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT;**
- (2) RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD AND HEALTHY MARRIAGE GRANTS AVAILABLE FROM THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE; AND**
- (3) ANY OTHER FUNDS AVAILABLE IN THE FEDERAL BUDGET CONCERNING FATHERHOOD OR HEALTHY MARRIAGE INITIATIVES.**

**(G) THE SECRETARY SHALL REPORT ANNUALLY TO THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE AND THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1246 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM, INCLUDING:**

- (1) THE NUMBER OF COUPLES PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM;**
- (2) THE NUMBER OF COUPLES SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THE PROGRAM; ~~AND~~**

- (3) FACTORS THAT AFFECT PROGRAM PARTICIPATION;**
- (4) THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS WHO OBTAIN EMPLOYMENT;**

**AND**

- (5) FOR EACH PARTICIPANT WHO OBTAINS EMPLOYMENT:**

- (I) THE TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT OBTAINED;**

- (II) THE NUMBER OF HOURS IN THE PARTICIPANT'S**  
**WORKWEEK;**

- (III) THE PARTICIPANT'S HOURLY RATE OF PAY; AND**

- (IV) ANY BENEFITS RECEIVED BY THE PARTICIPANT.**

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Secretary of Human Resources shall report on or before October 1, 2013, to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations Committee, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, on the Department of Human Resources efforts to secure funding for the Couples Advancing Together Pilot Program from federal grants or other funds available in the federal budget under Section 1 of this Act.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2013. It shall remain effective for a period of 2 years and 1 month and, at the end of June 30, 2015, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

**Approved by the Governor, May 2, 2013.**