

HOUSE BILL 973

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By: **Delegates Rosenberg and Haynes**

Introduced and read first time: February 10, 2016

Assigned to: Health and Government Operations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Couples Advancing Together Pilot Program – Additions and Extension**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring the Couples Advancing Together Pilot Program to include
4 the implementation of a certain collaborative learning project through which the
5 Department of Human Resources works with representatives of certain
6 organizations to, on an ongoing basis, document, assess from certain perspectives,
7 and identify certain changes to be made to, the implementation of certain policies
8 and procedures; requiring the Program to include the development of a certain
9 data-sharing agreement; requiring the Program to include implementation of a
10 certain earned income disregard for certain participants in the Program who obtain
11 certain employment; requiring the Secretary of Human Resources to allocate at least
12 a certain amount each fiscal year for the Program; altering the termination date of
13 the Program; and generally relating to the Couples Advancing Together Pilot
14 Program.

15 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
16 Article – Human Services
17 Section 5–101(a), (c), (e), (f), and (g) and 5–301(a) and (b)
18 Annotated Code of Maryland
19 (2007 Volume and 2015 Supplement)

20 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
21 Article – Human Services
22 Section 5–318.1
23 Annotated Code of Maryland
24 (2007 Volume and 2015 Supplement)

25 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
26 Chapter 367 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2013, as amended by Chapter
27 422 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2015
28 Section 3

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



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

3 **Article – Human Services**

4 5–101.

5 (a) In this title the following words have the meanings indicated.

6 (c) “Department” means the Department of Human Resources.

7 (e) “Local department” means:

8 (1) a local department of social services created or continued in a county
9 under § 3–201 of this article; or

10 (2) in Montgomery County, the Montgomery County government.

11 (f) “Local director” means the director of a local department.

12 (g) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Human Resources.

13 5–301.

14 (a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.

15 (b) “FIP” means the Family Investment Program.

16 5–318.1.

17 (a) In this section, “Program” means the Couples Advancing Together Pilot
18 Program in the Department.

19 (b) (1) In cooperation with the local directors and in consultation with the
20 Commission on Responsible Fatherhood, the Secretary shall establish a Couples Advancing
21 Together Pilot Program.

22 (2) The purpose of the Program is to assist couples that qualify as a family
23 eligible for the FIP to move toward stable relationships and family friendly employment,
24 for one or both parents of a child who resides with the family, in order to improve their
25 economic circumstances and provide support for lasting family units.

26 (3) (i) The Program shall be established in one county.

27 (ii) On or after July 1, 2015, the Program shall assist 50 couples.

1 (c) The Program shall include, in addition to the FIP requirements for recipients
2 under § 5–309(b) of this subtitle:

3 (1) implementation of policies and procedures in the local department that
4 encourage increased participation of both parents at the beginning of the process for
5 determining the eligibility of a family or custodial parent for FIP benefits, including
6 temporary cash assistance, unless the Department has reason to believe either parent has
7 a history of domestic violence;

8 **(2) IMPLEMENTATION OF A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT**
9 **THROUGH WHICH THE DEPARTMENT, ON AN ONGOING BASIS, WORKS WITH**
10 **REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION AND PARTNER**
11 **ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE PROVIDING SERVICES UNDER THE PROGRAM TO:**

12 **(I) DOCUMENT THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**
13 **IMPLEMENTED IN THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT TO ENCOURAGE INCREASED**
14 **PARTICIPATION OF BOTH PARENTS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS FOR**
15 **DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY FOR FIP BENEFITS;**

16 **(II) ASSESS, FROM PARTICIPANT AND PROVIDER**
17 **PERSPECTIVES, THE EXTENT TO WHICH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICIES AND**
18 **PROCEDURES IN THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT HAS INCREASED:**

19 **1. THE PARTICIPATION OF BOTH PARENTS IN THE**
20 **PROCESS FOR DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY FOR FIP BENEFITS; AND**

21 **2. ENROLLMENT IN THE PROGRAM;**

22 **(III) IDENTIFY CHANGES TO BE MADE TO THE POLICIES AND**
23 **PROCEDURES TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS FOR DETERMINING**
24 **ELIGIBILITY AND ENROLLMENT IN THE PROGRAM; AND**

25 **(IV) DOCUMENT AND ASSESS THE IMPLEMENTATION AND**
26 **OUTCOME OF ANY CHANGES MADE TO THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN THE**
27 **LOCAL DEPARTMENT;**

28 **[(2)] (3)** development of a local department referral process or integrated
29 partnerships with other local or State agencies through which couples may jointly access
30 programs and services that target economic stability, healthy relationships, and parenting;
31 **[and]**

32 **[(3)] (4)** implementation of the Program requirements under subsection
33 (d) of this section;

1 **(5) IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EARNED INCOME DISREGARD UNDER**
2 **SUBSECTION (F) OF THIS SECTION; AND**

3 **(6) DEVELOPMENT OF A DATA-SHARING AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE**
4 **DEPARTMENT AND ANY PARTNER ORGANIZATION THAT IS PROVIDING SERVICES**
5 **UNDER THE PROGRAM SPECIFYING:**

6 **(I) THE TYPES OF DATA NEEDED:**

7 **1. FOR EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE PROGRAM**
8 **MANAGEMENT; AND**

9 **2. TO ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM**
10 **AND PREPARE THE REPORTS REQUIRED UNDER SUBSECTION (H) OF THIS SECTION;**
11 **AND**

12 **(II) THE MANNER AND TIMING FOR SHARING DATA.**

13 (d) (1) The Program shall include a 6-week participation period during which
14 couples receive education on, and are provided with the tools needed for, achieving success
15 at home, in the workplace, and in society.

16 (2) With the assistance of subject matter experts identified by the
17 Secretary and local directors, couples shall:

18 (i) develop a written family-focused career plan;

19 (ii) learn skills that are required to compete in the job market; and

20 (iii) attend couples-focused group sessions that:

21 1. teach skills in employment and financial literacy;

22 2. aid couples in achieving economic stability; and

23 3. build healthy relationships.

24 (e) To be eligible to participate in the Program, a couple must be raising together
25 a child under the age of 14 years.

26 **(F) (1) NOTWITHSTANDING § 5-310(A) OF THIS SUBTITLE, FOR FIP**
27 **RECIPIENTS WHO ARE SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM WHO OBTAIN**
28 **UNSUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT AND WORK LESS THAN 25 HOURS A WEEK, THE**
29 **AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE SHALL BE COMPUTED BY COUNTING NO MORE THAN 4**

1 WEEKS OF EARNED INCOME IN ANY MONTH AND DISREGARDING 40% OF THAT
2 EARNED INCOME.

3 (2) NOTWITHSTANDING § 5-310(A) OF THIS SUBTITLE, FOR FIP
4 RECIPIENTS WHO ARE SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM WHO OBTAIN
5 UNSUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT AND WORK AT LEAST 25 HOURS A WEEK, THE AMOUNT
6 OF ASSISTANCE SHALL BE COMPUTED BY COUNTING NO MORE THAN 4 WEEKS OF
7 EARNED INCOME IN ANY MONTH AND DISREGARDING:

8 (I) 100% OF THAT EARNED INCOME FOR THE FIRST 6 MONTHS
9 OF EMPLOYMENT;

10 (II) 60% OF THAT EARNED INCOME FOR EMPLOYMENT
11 EXCEEDING 6 MONTHS, BUT LESS THAN 10 MONTHS; AND

12 (III) 40% OF THAT EARNED INCOME FOR EMPLOYMENT
13 EXCEEDING 9 MONTHS.

14 [(f)] (G) In addition to any other funds available to fund the Program, the
15 Secretary shall:

16 (1) ALLOCATE AT LEAST \$250,000 EACH FISCAL YEAR FOR THE
17 PROGRAM; AND

18 (2) attempt to access funds from:

19 [(1)] (I) discretionary grants available from the federal Office of Child
20 Support Enforcement;

21 [(2)] (II) Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage grants available
22 from the federal Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Family Assistance;
23 and

24 [(3)] (III) any other funds available in the federal budget concerning
25 fatherhood or healthy marriage initiatives.

26 [(g)] (H) The Secretary shall report annually to the Senate Finance Committee
27 and the House Appropriations Committee, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State
28 Government Article, on the effectiveness of the Program, including:

29 (1) the number of couples participating in the Program;

30 (2) the number of couples successfully completing the Program;

31 (3) factors that affect Program participation;

- 1 (4) the number of participants who obtain employment; and
- 2 (5) for each participant who obtains employment:
- 3 (i) the type of employment obtained;
- 4 (ii) the number of hours in the participant's workweek;
- 5 (iii) the participant's hourly rate of pay; and
- 6 (iv) any benefits received by the participant.

7 **Chapter 367 of the Acts of 2013, as amended by Chapter 422 of the Acts of 2015**

8 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June
9 1, 2013. It shall remain effective for a period of [3] 5 years and 1 month and, at the end of
10 June 30, [2016] 2018, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act
11 shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

12 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June
13 1, 2016.