

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 461 (Delegate Turner. *et al.*)

Judiciary

Family Law - Adoption Search, Contact, and Reunion Services - Siblings

This bill requires that the right to apply for, and be the subject of, adoption search, contact, and reunion services be extended to the siblings of adopted individuals. A sibling of an adopted individual, related by whole or half blood, who is at least 21 years old may apply to have a confidential intermediary attempt to contact an adopted individual at least 21 years old, or a biological parent. This bill also allows an adopted individual to apply for a confidential intermediary to contact, or attempt to contact, a sibling. The bill also provides that when a natural parent grants consent for the adoption or guardianship of a child, that parent must be expressly notified that siblings of the adopted individual are given search rights to locate and contact the adoptee.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's requirements could be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 679 of 1998 provides that the Social Services Administration (SSA) of the Maryland Department of Human Resources must provide adoption search, contact, and reunion services. Adopted individuals and biological parents over 21 years of age are currently allowed to apply for these services through the use of an approved confidential intermediary. Chapter 679 provides for the release of birth and adoption records under certain circumstances for those adoptions finalized before January 1, 2000, and provides for a less restrictive release of records requested for adoptions finalized after January 1, 2000.

Background: This bill expands the SSA's current adoption search, contact, and reunion services criteria to include the release of information on an adopted individual's siblings. Prior to 1998, the original birth certificate and a report of the decree or judgement of adoption were under seal and not open to inspection by any person, except by court order. However, an adopted individual, sibling, or birth parent could access non-identifying medical information pertaining to the adoption or could register with the Mutual Consent Voluntary Adoption Registry through SSA.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Human Resources, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Vital Statistics Administration), Department of Legislative Services

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cm/jr

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