

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 903 (Delegate McIntosh. *et al.*)

Appropriations

**Department of Human Resources - Reducing Caseloads in Foster Care and
Protective Services**

This bill requires the Department of Human Resources (DHR) to request, and the Governor to provide in the State budget, the additional qualified caseworker and casework supervisor positions necessary to attain appropriate caseload to staff ratios in child protective services, family preservation, foster care, kinship care, and preadoption.

The effective date of this bill is July 1, 2000.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures would increase by \$68.76 million in FY 2002. No effect in FY 2001. Future year expenditures increase with inflation. No effect on revenues.

(in millions)	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005
GF Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditures	0	68.76	96.04	100.65	105.48
Net Effect	\$0	(\$68.76)	(\$96.04)	(\$100.65)	(\$105.48)

Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - =indeterminate effect

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The Secretary of DHR and the Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) must develop the appropriate caseload ratios as indicated in Chapter 544 of 1998. The relevant caseload ratios for the 24 jurisdictions must be based on the DHR and DBM December 15, 1998, report filed in compliance with Section 2 of Chapter 544 of 1998.

The Governor must include in the annual State operating budgets for fiscal 2002 and 2003 the funds needed to reduce, in equal shares, the caseload-to-staff ratios for child protective services, family preservation, foster care, kinship care, and preadoption cases.

Both DHR and DBM must submit a progress report on the achievement of the appropriate caseload ratios by January 1 and July 1 of calendar 2001 through 2003 and on January 1, 2004, to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, the Senate Finance Committee, and the House Appropriations Committee.

Current Law: Chapter 544 of 1998 required DHR and DBM to develop appropriate caseload to staff ratios for every jurisdiction based on the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) standard of 15 foster care cases per worker and 12 protective services cases per worker.

Background: The CWLA was contracted by DHR to analyze the policies and practices of Maryland's child welfare system. CWLA published its report, *A Review of the Maryland Child Welfare System*, in January 1997. The report recommends that, in the area of foster care services, DHR develop a strategy to reduce the average caseload for foster care to the CWLA standard of 15 foster care cases per worker and 12 protective services cases per worker. Caseload ratios were developed by DHR and DBM for each local jurisdiction using the ratios recommended by CWLA. DHR and DBM submitted a report in December 1998 to various legislative committees on the proposed caseload ratios for child protective services, family preservation, foster care, kinship care, and preadoption care services. Based on experience and a task force study, the report recommends one caseworker and one-half aide to eight family caseload ratio. A pilot program testing the effect of ratios recommended by the task force is currently operating in Allegany, Anne Arundel, and Caroline counties, as well as in the northwestern part of Baltimore City.

State Fiscal Effect: Based on caseworker to case data supplied by DHR, and the December 1998 DHR and DBM report recommending a ratio of one caseworker and one-half aide to eight family caseload, DHR would need a total of 2,107 new positions. General fund expenditures would thus increase by \$68.76 million in fiscal 2002 to bring the caseload to

worker ratio up to the recommended level. This estimate includes a 90-day start-up delay and the cost of hiring 792 family caseworkers I, 33 typist-clerks, 1,048 human services associates III, and 234 supervisors. It includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs and ongoing operating expenses.

Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$59.00 million
Operating Expenses	<u>9.76 million</u>
Total FY 2001 State Expenditures	\$68.76 million

Future year expenditures reflect (1) full salaries with 4.5% annual increase and 3% employee turnover; and (2) 1% annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

Small Business Effect: The bill's provisions regarding staffing ratios could adversely affect any small business entity with which DHR contracts for the provision of casework services. Conversely, small businesses that either provide training for caseworkers or are the beneficiaries of paid internships could be favorably affected. In addition, the available pool of employees in the social services field could be reduced, increasing competition for available qualified employees.

Additional Comments: The intent of bill is unclear due to the fact that the CWLA standard of 15 foster care cases per worker and 12 protective services cases per worker is referenced along with the December 1998 DHR and DBM report recommending a one caseworker and one-half aide to eight family caseload ratio.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 728 (Senator Van Hollen, *et al.*) - Finance and Budget and Taxation.

Information Source(s): Department of Human Resources; Child Welfare League of America, *A Review of the Maryland Child Welfare System*, January 1997; Department of Legislative Services

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