

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2007 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 397

(Delegate Haddaway, *et al.*)

Judiciary

Finance

Eastern Shore Task Force on Foster Care

This bill establishes an Eastern Shore Task Force on Foster Care to: (1) consider incentives that will enhance foster care parent recruitment and retention; (2) consider hiring a permanent staff person in each local department of social services (LDSS) to recruit, retain, and support foster care parents and consider potential funding sources for those positions; and (3) make recommendations on improving foster care parent recruitment and retention. By December 31, 2007, the task force must submit an interim report on its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly, with its final report due by December 31, 2008. The Department of Human Resources (DHR) must staff the task force.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2007 and terminates June 30, 2009.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for DHR are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: DHR's Social Services Administration (SSA) must establish an out-of-home placement program (which includes foster care) for minor children who are:

(1) voluntarily placed in an LDSS' custody for up to 180 days by a parent or guardian under a binding, written agreement; (2) abused, abandoned, neglected, or dependent if a juvenile court has determined that continuing to stay in the child's home is contrary to the child's welfare and has committed the child to the custody or guardianship of an LDSS; or (3) with SSA's approval, placed by an LDSS under a voluntary placement agreement because the parent is unable to provide treatment or care related to a child's disability.

Background: DHR advises that 296 children are in family foster care homes and 85 children are in group homes on the Eastern Shore.

DHR regulations specify the rates a foster parent receives for the care of foster children. The regular foster care rate, for children who do not require unusual care and supervision, is based on the child's age: \$635 per month for the regular care of a child from an infant to age 11; and \$650 per month for the regular care of a child age 12 or older.

All potential foster parents must meet DHR's basic approval requirements which include being at least 21 years old; submitting to a criminal background check; submitting to an initial medical examination and reexamination every two years; providing three references regarding the applicant's parenting ability; completing a 27-hour pre-service course; and submitting to a home health and safety inspection.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Human Resources, Department of Legislative Services

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