

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2013 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 802

(Senator Klausmeier, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

Department of Human Resources - Adoption Awareness Program

This bill requires the Department of Human Resources (DHR) to collaborate with interest groups that specialize in adoption-related issues to prepare specified educational materials about creating an adoption plan for an infant.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase minimally beginning in FY 2014 for DHR to prepare and distribute educational materials. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The educational materials must provide prospective birth mothers and birth fathers information about the adoption process. The educational materials must (1) be designed to inform birth mothers and birth fathers about adoption as an option for an unintended pregnancy; (2) include a brochure, a poster, and Internet-based information; and (3) be updated periodically and distributed in consultation with interest groups that specialize in adoption-related issues. The educational materials must be supplied at no cost to any medical or community organization interested in providing information about adoption. The brochure must be available in electronic form on DHR's website and supplemented on the website by additional information and resources available to birth mothers and birth fathers facing an unintended pregnancy who are seeking information about creating an adoption plan for their infant.

Current Law: DHR facilitates adoptions through local departments of social services and licenses private adoption agencies in the State. It also provides search, contact, and reunion services. It is not specifically required to provide educational materials relating to adoption to medical or community organizations. The Family Law Article sets forth procedures and requirements regarding adoption through a local department of social services and through private agencies. The purposes of the statutory requirements are to (1) timely provide permanent and safe homes for children consistent with their best interests; (2) protect children from unnecessary separation from their parents; (3) ensure adoption only by individuals fit for the responsibility; (4) protect parents from making hurried or ill-considered agreements to terminate parental rights; (5) protect prospective adoptive parents by giving them information about children or prospective adoptees and their backgrounds; and (6) protect adoptive parents from future disturbances of their relationship with children by former parents.

State Fiscal Effect: DHR advises that the bill's requirements increase expenditures by approximately \$1.7 million in fiscal 2014, which reflects the bill's October 1, 2013 effective date, and by approximately \$2.0 million annually thereafter. These estimates are based on costs associated with printing and mailing 10,000 posters annually, at a cost of \$18 each, and preparing and mailing one million brochures annually, at a cost of \$1.85 each. The Department of Legislative Services disagrees and advises that a less ambitious awareness program can likely meet the bill's requirements in a more fiscally responsible manner, with minimal additional cost to DHR. *For illustrative purposes*, using the per unit costs provided by DHR, if 1,000 posters and brochures are prepared and mailed, costs increase by less than \$20,000. Also, the bill does not require that educational material be updated each year, but just periodically.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 26, 2013
ncs/lgc

Analysis by: Jennifer K. Botts

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510