

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 460
 Appropriations

(Delegates Rosenberg and Haynes)

Finance

Couples Advancing Together Pilot Program - Eligibility and Extension

This bill extends, from June 30, 2015, to June 30, 2016, the termination date for the Couples Advancing Together Pilot Program within the Department of Human Resources (DHR). The bill alters the general requirement for the program to be established in at least three counties and instead requires the program to be established in one county and assist 50 couples on or after July 1, 2015. The bill alters eligibility requirements for participation by repealing the requirement that an individual must be an adult younger than age 36; instead, the bill requires that in order to participate, a couple must be raising together a child younger than age 14.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2015, and terminates June 30, 2016.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$50,000 in FY 2016 to extend the pilot program. Potential increase in federal fund revenues in FY 2016 to the extent the bill enables DHR to leverage additional federal funds.

(in dollars)	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
FF Revenue	-	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net Effect	(\$50,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: Chapter 367 of 2013 established the Couples Advancing Together Pilot Program. The pilot program was required to be established in cooperation with directors of local departments of social services and in consultation with the Commission on Responsible Fatherhood. An individual must be an adult younger than age 36 to participate. The pilot program must include:

- implementation of policies and procedures in the local departments of social services that encourage increased participation of fathers at the beginning of the process for determining the eligibility of a family or custodial parent for benefits, including temporary cash assistance, unless the department believes the father has a history of domestic violence; and
- development of a local department referral process or integrated partnerships with other local or State agencies through which couples may jointly access programs and services that target economic stability, healthy relationships, and parenting.

The program must also include a six-week participation period during which couples receive education on, and are provided with the tools needed for, achieving success at home, in the workplace, and in society. With the assistance of subject matter experts, couples must (1) develop a written family focused career plan; (2) learn competitive skills for the job market; and (3) attend couples-focused group sessions that teach skills in employment and financial literacy, aid couples in achieving economic stability, and build healthy relationships.

In addition to any other funds available to fund the program, DHR must attempt to access funds from (1) discretionary grants available from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement; (2) Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage grants available from the federal Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Family Assistance; and (3) any other funds available in the federal budget concerning fatherhood or healthy marriage initiatives.

Pursuant to Chapter 367, DHR established a pilot program in Baltimore City through the Center for Urban Families. The pilot program is scheduled to terminate June 30, 2015.

State Fiscal Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$50,000 in fiscal 2016 to continue the pilot program and meet the bill's requirement to assist 50 couples on or after July 1, 2015. This estimate, based on the existing pilot program, assumes that contractual services to provide the required education, training, and materials total \$1,000 per couple.

The Department of Legislative Services notes that the need to use general funds may be reduced or eliminated entirely to the extent that DHR is able to leverage federal funds to support the program. Despite the bill's June 1, 2015 effective date, it is assumed that no costs attributable to the continuation of the pilot program are incurred until fiscal 2016.

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 20, 2015
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