

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 412
Finance

(Senator Robinson)

Task Force on Baltimore City Department of Social Services Oversight

This bill creates the Task Force on Baltimore City Department of Social Services Oversight, which must be staffed by the Department of Human Services (DHS). By December 1, 2019, the task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly. A member of the task force may not receive compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations, as provided in the State budget. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2018, and terminates June 30, 2020.**

Fiscal Summary

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The task force must study the following matters relating to the Baltimore City Department of Social Services (BCDSS): (1) the qualifications of managers and social workers; (2) how social workers are supervised; (3) the caseload of each social worker; (4) the methods social workers use to perform family visits and visits with children; (5) the process by which complaints are resolved; (6) the types and frequency of complaints received; (7) how and when decisions are made to place a child in foster care; and (8) how employees allocate their time among their various duties. For each of these items, the task

force must study national best practices. The task force must also collect data on the number of children served by BCDSS who are victims of child abuse and neglect and who become victims of murder. To the extent practicable, the task force must catalog this data by the month in which each instance occurred.

The task force must use the information studied and data collected to make recommendations regarding methods by which BCDSS can align with national best practices and any legislation the task force considers necessary for reform.

Current Law/Background: Programs operated under the purview of DHS, such as child support enforcement, public benefits, and child welfare services, are primarily delivered through local departments of social services in each county and Baltimore City. Each local department has a director appointed with the concurrence of the Secretary of Human Services and the county executive, county council or commissioners, or Mayor of Baltimore City. The allocation of State and federal funds to the local departments is controlled by DHS, which also sets policy for most of the programs administered by the local departments.

Local boards of social services (referred to as the Social Services Commission in Baltimore City) provide additional input into the activities of the local departments. The responsibilities include advising the local departments, advocating on social service issues, consulting with the director on new services for unmet needs, and assisting in the evaluation of the director. Commission members in Baltimore City are appointed by the mayor with city council approval.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Human Services; Department of Legislative Services

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mm/jc

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