

HOUSE BILL 1181

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By: **Delegate Rosenberg**

Introduced and read first time: February 8, 2019

Assigned to: Health and Government Operations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Family Investment Program – Couples Advancing Together Program**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring the Secretary of Human Services to establish the Couples
4 Advancing Together Program in the Department of Human Services; requiring the
5 Program to be established in at least a certain number of counties in the State in
6 order to assist the participating couples and parents to move toward stable
7 relationships and family–friendly employment; requiring the Secretary to cooperate
8 with certain local directors of social services regarding the establishment of the
9 Program; establishing the purpose of the Program; providing for the components of
10 the Program, including the implementation of certain policies and procedures in
11 certain local departments, the development of a certain referral process or certain
12 integrated partnerships for certain parents and couples, and the implementation of
13 certain Program requirements; establishing certain requirements for eligibility to
14 participate in the Program; requiring the Secretary to attempt to access certain
15 federal grants and funds; requiring the Secretary to report annually to certain
16 committees of the General Assembly; providing for the contents of the annual report;
17 requiring the Department, in consultation with the Center for Urban Families and
18 the Annie E. Casey Foundation, to submit a certain report to the General Assembly
19 on or before a certain date; stating that it is the intent of the General Assembly that
20 the Governor include certain appropriations in the State budget for certain fiscal
21 years for the Program; defining a certain term; and generally relating to the Couples
22 Advancing Together Program and the Family Investment Program.

23 BY adding to

24 Article – Human Services

25 Section 5–318.1

26 Annotated Code of Maryland

27 (2007 Volume and 2018 Supplement)

28 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
29 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



Article – Human Services

5–318.1.

(A) IN THIS SECTION, “PROGRAM” MEANS THE COUPLES ADVANCING TOGETHER PROGRAM IN THE DEPARTMENT.

(B) (1) IN COOPERATION WITH THE LOCAL DIRECTORS, THE SECRETARY SHALL ESTABLISH THE COUPLES ADVANCING TOGETHER PROGRAM.

(2) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO ASSIST COUPLES AND PARENTS THAT QUALIFY AS A FAMILY ELIGIBLE FOR THE FIP TO MOVE TOWARD STABLE RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY EMPLOYMENT, FOR ONE OR BOTH PARENTS OF A CHILD WHO RESIDES WITH THE FAMILY, IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THEIR ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES AND PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR LASTING FAMILY UNITS.

(3) THE PROGRAM SHALL BE ESTABLISHED IN AT LEAST ONE COUNTY.

(C) THE PROGRAM SHALL INCLUDE, IN ADDITION TO THE FIP REQUIREMENTS FOR RECIPIENTS UNDER § 5–309(B) OF THIS SUBTITLE:

(1) IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT THAT ENCOURAGE:

(I) INCREASED PARTICIPATION OF FATHERS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS FOR DETERMINING THE ELIGIBILITY OF A FAMILY OR CUSTODIAL PARENT FOR FIP BENEFITS, INCLUDING TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE, UNLESS THE DEPARTMENT HAS REASON TO BELIEVE THE FATHER HAS A HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; AND

(II) THE CREATION AND EXPANSION OF SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS TOGETHER;

(2) DEVELOPMENT OF A LOCAL DEPARTMENT REFERRAL PROCESS OR INTEGRATED PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER LOCAL OR STATE AGENCIES THROUGH WHICH PARENTS, AND COUPLES JOINTLY, MAY ACCESS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES THAT TARGET ECONOMIC STABILITY, HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS, AND PARENTING; AND

(3) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS UNDER SUBSECTION (D) OF THIS SECTION.

1 **(D) (1) THE PROGRAM SHALL PROVIDE PARTICIPANTS WITH EDUCATION**
2 **ON, AND THE TOOLS NEEDED FOR, ACHIEVING SUCCESS AT HOME, IN THE**
3 **WORKPLACE, AND IN SOCIETY THROUGH:**

4 **(I) AN 8-WEEK PARTICIPATION PERIOD; AND**

5 **(II) CASE MANAGEMENT FOR NO MORE THAN 2 YEARS**
6 **IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE PARTICIPATION PERIOD IN SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF**
7 **THIS PARAGRAPH.**

8 **(2) WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE CENTER FOR URBAN FAMILIES**
9 **AND OTHER SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS IDENTIFIED BY THE SECRETARY AND LOCAL**
10 **DIRECTORS, PARTICIPANTS SHALL:**

11 **(I) DEVELOP SKILLS TO ENHANCE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**
12 **AND PARENTING;**

13 **(II) DEVELOP A WRITTEN FAMILY-FOCUSED CAREER PLAN;**

14 **(III) LEARN SKILLS THAT ARE REQUIRED TO COMPETE IN THE**
15 **JOB MARKET; AND**

16 **(IV) ATTEND GROUP SESSIONS THAT:**

17 **1. TEACH SKILLS IN EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCIAL**
18 **LITERACY;**

19 **2. AID COUPLES IN ACHIEVING ECONOMIC STABILITY;**
20 **AND**

21 **3. BUILD HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.**

22 **(E) TO BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM, A COUPLE MUST BE**
23 **RAISING TOGETHER A CHILD UNDER THE AGE OF 14 YEARS.**

24 **(F) IN ADDITION TO ANY OTHER FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR THE PROGRAM,**
25 **THE SECRETARY SHALL ATTEMPT TO ACCESS FUNDS FROM:**

26 **(1) DISCRETIONARY GRANTS AVAILABLE FROM THE FEDERAL OFFICE**
27 **OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT;**

28 **(2) RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD AND HEALTHY MARRIAGE GRANTS**

1 AVAILABLE FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,
2 OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE; AND

3 (3) ANY OTHER FUNDS AVAILABLE IN THE FEDERAL BUDGET
4 CONCERNING FATHERHOOD, THE TWO-GENERATION APPROACH, OR HEALTHY
5 MARRIAGE INITIATIVES.

6 (G) THE SECRETARY SHALL REPORT ANNUALLY TO THE SENATE FINANCE
7 COMMITTEE AND THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, IN ACCORDANCE
8 WITH § 2-1246 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
9 THE PROGRAM, INCLUDING:

10 (1) THE NUMBER OF COUPLES AND INDIVIDUAL PARENTS
11 PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM;

12 (2) THE NUMBER OF COUPLES AND INDIVIDUAL PARENTS
13 SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THE PROGRAM;

14 (3) FACTORS THAT AFFECT PROGRAM PARTICIPATION;

15 (4) THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS WHO OBTAIN EMPLOYMENT; AND

16 (5) FOR EACH PARTICIPANT WHO OBTAINS EMPLOYMENT:

17 (I) THE TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT OBTAINED;

18 (II) THE NUMBER OF HOURS IN THE PARTICIPANT'S WORKWEEK;

19 (III) THE PARTICIPANT'S HOURLY RATE OF PAY; AND

20 (IV) ANY BENEFITS RECEIVED BY THE PARTICIPANT.

21 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, on or before December 1,
22 2019, the Department of Human Services, in consultation with the Center for Urban
23 Families and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, shall report to the General Assembly, in
24 accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, on:

25 (1) any current practices and procedures of the Family Investment
26 Administration, local departments of social services, the Child Support Administration,
27 and any other local or State policy, whether authorized by statute, regulation, or practice,
28 that may adversely impact or impede the progress of parents who qualify for Family
29 Investment Administration services and benefits; and

30 (2) recommendations of best practices for, and policy changes to be made

1 to, the Family Investment Administration, the Child Support Administration, and any
2 other local or State body that will enable couples striving to navigate social service systems,
3 including:

4 (i) income qualification guidelines for Family Investment
5 Administration cash assistance; and

6 (ii) the model demonstrated by the Couples Advancing Together
7 Program.

8 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That it is the intent of the General
9 Assembly that the Governor shall include in the annual State budget for each of fiscal years
10 2021 through 2025 an appropriation of \$650,000 for the Couples Advancing Together
11 Program.

12 SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
13 1, 2019.