



**Substitute Senate Bill No. 289**

**Public Act No. 22-138**

**AN ACT CONCERNING OVERSIGHT AND FUNDING OF THE CONNECTICUT FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) As used in this section and section 2 of this act, (1) "Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative", or "CFI", means an initiative that (A) promotes the positive involvement and interaction of fathers with their children with an emphasis on children from low-income families, and (B) identifies services that effectively encourage and enhance responsible and skillful parenting and increase the ability of fathers to meet the financial and emotional needs of their children; and (2) "CFI objectives" means efforts to: (A) Promote public education concerning the financial and emotional responsibilities of fatherhood, (B) assist men in preparation for the legal, financial and emotional responsibilities of fatherhood, (C) promote the establishment of paternity at childbirth, (D) encourage fathers, regardless of marital status, to foster their emotional connection to and financial support of their children, (E) establish support mechanisms for fathers in their relationship with their children, regardless of their marital and financial status, and (F) integrate state and local services available for families.

(b) There is established within the Department of Social Services the Office of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative. The office shall be

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overseen by the Commissioner of Social Services and shall perform administrative duties on behalf of the CFI in accordance with a strategic plan developed and implemented as part of the initiative with the approval of the council established pursuant to section 2 of this act.

Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a CFI Council to approve the work of the CFI, including, but not limited to, implementation of CFI objectives through a strategic plan developed by the CFI. The council shall actively participate in efforts that further CFI objectives, including, but not limited to: (1) Fostering collaboration between state agencies that provide services for fathers and families; (2) (A) coordinating comprehensive services, (B) ensuring the continuity of services, (C) heightening the impact of services, and (D) avoiding duplication of services; and (3) supporting fathers of children eligible or formerly eligible for services under the temporary assistance for needy families block grant.

(b) The membership of the council shall consist of:

(1) The Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's designee;

(2) The Commissioner of Children and Families, or the commissioner's designee;

(3) The Commissioner of Correction, or the commissioner's designee;

(4) The Commissioner of Early Childhood, or the commissioner's designee;

(5) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee;

(6) The Commissioner of Developmental Services, or the commissioner's designee;

(7) The Commissioner of Housing, or the commissioner's designee;

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- (8) The Labor Commissioner, or the commissioner's designee;
- (9) The Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or the commissioner's designee;
- (10) The Commissioner of Public Health, or the commissioner's designee;
- (11) The Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, or the commissioner's designee;
- (12) The chairperson of the Board of Pardons and Parole, or the chairperson's designee;
- (13) The director of the Support Enforcement Services Division and the executive director of the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch, or their designees;
- (14) The Chief Family Support Magistrate, or the Chief Family Support Magistrate's designee;
- (15) The president of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, or the president's designee;
- (16) The director of the Office of Child Support Services within the Department of Social Services, or the director's designee; and
- (17) Eleven members appointed by the Commissioner of Social Services, including:
  - (A) One with expertise in the area of legal assistance to low-income populations;
  - (B) One representative of the Governor's Workforce Council;
  - (C) One representative of a regional workforce development board;

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- (D) One member with expertise in family relations;
- (E) One or more representatives of a local fatherhood program;
- (F) One member with expertise in male mental and physical health;
- (G) One member representing the interests of custodial parents;
- (H) One member representing the interests of noncustodial parents;
- (I) One member representing the interests of children;
- (J) One member with expertise in the area of domestic violence; and
- (K) One member with expertise in child development.

(c) The Commissioner of Social Services shall serve as a chairperson of the council and shall designate a cochairperson from among the membership of the council. The commissioner shall convene the council not later than thirty days after the effective date of this section, and the council shall meet at least quarterly thereafter. The commissioner shall fill any vacancy of seats under subdivision (17) of subsection (b) of this section.

(d) The Commissioner of Social Services may designate a working group from among the members of the council to carry out specific duties required under this section and section 1 of this act. The commissioner shall seek the advice and participation of any person, organization or state or federal agency the commissioner deems necessary to carry out the provisions of this section and section 1 of this act.

(e) The Commissioner of Social Services, in consultation with the council and within available resources, shall apply for any available federal and private funds for programs that promote CFI objectives in accordance with this section and section 1 of this act. The commissioner

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shall award grants from any such available funds to entities that provide (1) employment and training opportunities for low-income fathers to increase the earning capacity of such fathers; (2) classes in parenting and financial literacy; and (3) other support services and programs that promote responsible parenting, economic stability and communication and interaction between fathers and their children.

(f) Applicants for grants provided pursuant to subsection (e) of this section shall apply to the Commissioner of Social Services at such time and in such manner as prescribed by the commissioner. The commissioner shall, in consultation with the council, establish criteria for eligibility for grants and for the awarding of grants. At a minimum, the commissioner shall require grantees to (1) implement accountability measures and results-based outcomes as a condition of being awarded a grant; (2) leverage funds through existing resources and collaboration with community-based and nonprofit organizations; and (3) consult with experts in domestic violence to ensure that, when appropriate, the programs and services provided to fathers and families pursuant to this section and section 1 of this act address issues concerning domestic violence.

(g) Not later than December 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the commissioner, in consultation with the council, shall report, in accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies, human services and children on the grant program's effectiveness in achieving CFI objectives.

Sec. 3. Section 17b-27a of the general statutes is repealed. (*Effective from passage*)