

# HOUSE BILL 958

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By: **Delegates Rosenberg and Haynes**  
Introduced and read first time: February 10, 2012  
Assigned to: Appropriations

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

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

3 FOR the purpose of requiring the Secretary of Human Resources to establish the  
4 Couples Advancing Together Pilot Program in the Department of Human  
5 Resources; requiring the Program to be established in at least a certain number  
6 of counties in the State; requiring the Secretary to cooperate with certain local  
7 directors of social services and to consult with the Commission on Responsible  
8 Fatherhood regarding the establishment of the Program; establishing the intent  
9 of the Program; providing for the components of the Program including the  
10 implementation of certain policies and procedures in certain local departments,  
11 the development of a certain referral process or certain integrated partnerships  
12 for certain couples, and the implementation of certain program requirements;  
13 establishing certain age requirements for eligibility to participate in the  
14 Program; requiring the Secretary to submit a certain annual report to the  
15 Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations Committee; providing  
16 for the contents of the annual report; defining a certain term; providing for the  
17 termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Couples Advancing  
18 Together Pilot Program and the Family Investment Program.

19 BY adding to  
20 Article – Human Services  
21 Section 5–318.1  
22 Annotated Code of Maryland  
23 (2007 Volume and 2011 Supplement)

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

26 **Article – Human Services**

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 **5-318.1.**

2 (A) IN THIS SECTION, "PROGRAM" MEANS THE COUPLES ADVANCING  
3 TOGETHER PILOT PROGRAM IN THE DEPARTMENT.

4 (B) (1) IN COOPERATION WITH THE LOCAL DIRECTORS, AND IN  
5 CONSULTATION WITH THE COMMISSION ON RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD, THE  
6 SECRETARY SHALL ESTABLISH A COUPLES ADVANCING TOGETHER PILOT  
7 PROGRAM.

8 (2) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO ASSIST COUPLES THAT  
9 QUALIFY AS A FAMILY ELIGIBLE FOR THE FIP TO MOVE TOWARD STABLE  
10 RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY EMPLOYMENT, FOR ONE OR BOTH  
11 PARTNERS, IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THEIR ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES AND  
12 PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR LASTING FAMILY UNITS.

13 (3) THE PROGRAM SHALL BE ESTABLISHED IN AT LEAST THREE  
14 COUNTIES.

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

17 (1) IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN THE  
18 LOCAL DEPARTMENT THAT ENCOURAGE INCREASED PARTICIPATION OF  
19 FATHERS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS FOR DETERMINING THE  
20 ELIGIBILITY OF A FAMILY OR CUSTODIAL PARENT FOR FIP BENEFITS,  
21 INCLUDING TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE, UNLESS THE DEPARTMENT HAS  
22 REASON TO BELIEVE THE FATHER HAS A HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE;

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

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

30 (D) (1) THE PROGRAM SHALL INCLUDE A 6-WEEK PARTICIPATION  
31 PERIOD DURING WHICH COUPLES RECEIVE EDUCATION ON, AND ARE PROVIDED  
32 WITH THE TOOLS NEEDED FOR, ACHIEVING SUCCESS AT HOME, IN THE  
33 WORKPLACE, AND IN SOCIETY.

1           **(2) WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS**  
2 **IDENTIFIED BY THE SECRETARY AND LOCAL DIRECTORS, COUPLES SHALL:**

3                   **(I) DEVELOP A WRITTEN FAMILY-FOCUSED CAREER PLAN;**

4                   **(II) LEARN SKILLS THAT ARE REQUIRED TO COMPETE IN**  
5 **THE JOB MARKET; AND**

6                   **(III) ATTEND COUPLES-FOCUSED GROUP SESSIONS THAT:**

7                           **1. TEACH SKILLS IN EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCIAL**  
8 **LITERACY;**

9                           **2. AID COUPLES IN ACHIEVING ECONOMIC**  
10 **STABILITY; AND**

11                           **3. BUILD HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.**

12           **(E) TO BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM, AN INDIVIDUAL**  
13 **MUST BE AN ADULT UNDER THE AGE OF 36 YEARS.**

14           **(F) THE SECRETARY SHALL REPORT ANNUALLY TO THE SENATE**  
15 **FINANCE COMMITTEE AND THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, IN**  
16 **ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1246 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, ON THE**  
17 **EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM, INCLUDING:**

18                   **(1) THE NUMBER OF COUPLES PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM;**

19                   **(2) THE NUMBER OF COUPLES SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THE**  
20 **PROGRAM; AND**

21                   **(3) FACTORS THAT AFFECT PROGRAM PARTICIPATION.**

22           SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
23 July 1, 2012. It shall remain effective for a period of 2 years and, at the end of June 30,  
24 2014, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be  
25 abrogated and of no further force and effect.