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H.B. 4
(1_134_0277-4)
134th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for H.B. 4's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: In Senate Judiciary

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Plummer and Manchester

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: Yes

Ryan Sherrock, Economist, and other LBO staff

Highlights

- Public children services agencies (PCSAs) will experience additional costs in order to meet the bill's requirements for memoranda of understanding (MOUs) established between PCSAs and other local agencies.
- The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) will experience additional costs to audit the MOUs and to promulgate certain rules regarding child neglect.
- ODJFS will realize costs to establish and support the Youth and Family Ombudsman Office.

Detailed Analysis

Memoranda of understanding

The bill makes numerous changes to the law affecting memoranda of understanding (MOUs) established between public children services agencies (PCSAs) and public officials and entities. Specifically, the bill establishes a review process for each county's MOU. As part of this process the bill requires biennially that each MOU be resigned and submitted to the respective county board of commissioners for approval and meet certain requirements. This will increase administrative work for many PCSAs and some of the public entities that enter into the MOUs.

The bill creates requirements for the MOUs and also requires the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) to create a model memorandum that provides guidance to meet the bill's requirements. Additionally, ODJFS will be required to audit each MOU biennially for compliance and maintain a list of counties meeting the requirements on its website, as well as a list of counties with memoranda that are not compliant. Currently, ODJFS has little involvement with these memoranda; both the Department and PCSAs will experience additional costs related to updating MOUs and going through the biennial audit.

Cross reporting

Additionally, the bill requires PCSAs to notify law enforcement if it receives a report of child abuse or a report of neglect that alleges a type of neglect identified in rules that the ODJFS Director must adopt no later than 90 days after the effective date of the bill. This could increase costs for PCSAs in order to provide the information; local law enforcement could experience costs depending on if they investigate additional reports. In addition, ODJFS will have costs to promulgate rules.

Youth and Family Ombudsman Office

The bill creates the Youth and Family Ombudsman Office under ODJFS, consisting of (1) a family ombudsman who is appointed by the Governor and investigates complaints made by adults, (2) a youth ombudsman who is appointed by the Governor with advice from the Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board (OHIO YAB) and investigates complaints made by youth and advocates for the best interest of children involved in concerns investigated by the Office, (3) not fewer than two regional ombudsmen, and (4) necessary support staff. The duties of the Office are to investigate and resolve concerns made by or on behalf of children and families involved with PCSAs, Title IV-E agencies, or private provider agencies that administer or oversee foster care or placement services for the children services system, as well as establishing procedures for receiving and resolving complaints consistent with state and federal law and providing an annual report. The annual report must be provided to OHIO YAB, which, not later than 60 days after the release of the report, must provide an evaluation of the report to the Governor and the Office's youth ombudsman. ODJFS will be responsible for all administrative undertakings for the Office, including the provision of offices, equipment, and supplies, as necessary. This will increase administrative costs for ODJFS.

Foster care and adoption home assessor qualifications

The bill adds that current and former PCSA caseworkers and PCSA caseworker supervisors, and an individual with a bachelor's degree in certain human services fields who has at least one year of experience working with families and children, is an individual qualified to perform foster care and adoption home studies. Allowing additional individuals to perform these studies could increase the number of studies conducted.