

OFFICE OF FISCAL ANALYSIS

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SB-2

AN ACT CONCERNING THE MENTAL, PHYSICAL AND
EMOTIONAL WELLNESS OF CHILDREN.

As Amended by Senate "A" (LCO 8214)

Senate Calendar No.: 73

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact: See below

Municipal Impact: See below

The bill as amended is anticipated to result in various fiscal impacts, identified by section below.

Section 1, which requires the Department of Public Health (DPH) to hire a full-time employee (anticipated to be a Processing Technician I) by 1/1/24 to assist in licensing social workers, results in an estimated cost to the agency of approximately \$31,188 in FY 24 (half-fiscal year) and \$62,375 in FY 25 (full-fiscal year). Costs to the Office of State Comptroller - Fringe Benefits for this position are approximately \$13,354 in FY 24 (half-fiscal year) and \$26,709 in FY 25 (full-fiscal year).

Section 2, which prohibits municipal libraries, beginning in FY 24, from receiving state library grants if they do not adhere to certain collection reconsideration policies, could result in a revenue loss to municipalities. The scope of the revenue loss would be dependent upon compliance with the policies and amount of state funding the municipality is eligible to receive.

Section 3 results in an annual cost to the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) of approximately \$5 million beginning in FY 25 by requiring a permanent increase in general administrative payments to Birth to

Three providers for certain children.

Section 4 makes technical and conforming changes and has no fiscal impact.

Section 5, which requires individualized family service plans to be translated and provided in Spanish, has no fiscal impact as the agency is currently in the process of revising the form to be available in several languages, including Spanish.

Section 6 requires OEC to provide Spanish-speaking interpreter or translator services for the Birth-to-Three program. This may result in a cost to OEC to the extent that there are no Spanish-speaking qualified personnel within the Birth-to-Three system to provide these services and OEC utilizes a translator or interpreter at a reimbursement rate equivalent to court-appointed translators and interpreters within the judicial branch.

Sections 7 and 8 require employers to allow certain workers to utilize accrued paid sick leave for a "mental health wellness day." This does not result in a fiscal impact to the Labor Department as it can administer this provision without the need for additional resources.

Section 9 could result in a fiscal impact to the Department of Social Services (DSS) associated with establishing Medicaid coverage for suicide risk assessments and mental health evaluations provided at school-based health centers or public schools. DSS currently covers comprehensive psychiatric diagnostic evaluations at these locations. To the extent that the bill requires DSS to establish coverage for a new, less comprehensive screening, DSS could experience a fiscal impact. This impact is dependent upon the utilization of the service and the rate established for it. The bill could also result in a revenue gain to towns to the extent that they receive Medicaid reimbursement for certain services provided by schools that are not currently reimbursable.

Sections 10 and 11 establish an Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate (OBHA) within the Insurance Department for administrative

purposes only, which would be led by a Behavioral Health Advocate. The amendment specifies that, in addition to the Behavioral Health Advocate, OBHA would include at least one Staff Attorney and one Patient Care Navigator, which is anticipated to result in total State costs of at least \$358,500 in FY 24 and at least \$734,000 in FY 25, and annually thereafter, presumably to the Insurance Fund.

The estimate assumes the hiring, on 1/1/24, of a Behavioral Health Advocate, a Staff Attorney 3, and a Patient Care Navigator (assumed to be comparable to a Nurse Consultant) with salaries totaling approximately \$160,000 in FY 24 and \$328,000 in FY 25.¹ An office with those three staff would incur fringe benefit costs of about \$165,500 in FY 24 and \$340,000 in FY 25, as well as Other Expenses and Indirect Overhead costs together totaling approximately \$33,000 in FY 24 and \$66,000 in FY 25.² To the extent that additional staff are hired, costs would be correspondingly higher. The estimate is based on the budget and staff positions for the existing Office of the Healthcare Advocate, which assists consumers with insurance claims.

Section 12 is anticipated to result in a net total General Fund revenue loss of approximately \$319,095 annually beginning in FY 24 by:

1. Reducing the initial Clinical Social Worker license application fee from \$315 to \$200 (a revenue loss of approximately \$88,550 annually),³
2. Reducing the initial Master Social Worker license application fee from \$220 to \$125 (a revenue loss of approximately \$77,615 annually),⁴ and
3. Increasing the Clinical Social Worker license renewal fee from

¹The FY 24 estimate reflects six months of costs.

²The fringe benefit costs for employees funded out of other appropriated funds are budgeted within the fringe benefit account of those funds, as opposed to the fringe benefit accounts within the Office of the State Comptroller. The estimated active employee fringe benefit cost associated with most personnel changes for other appropriated fund employees is 103.41% of payroll in FY 23.

³There were 770 initial applications for Clinical Social Worker licenses in FY 22.

⁴There were 817 initial applications for Master Social Worker licenses in FY 22.

\$195 to \$200 (a revenue gain of approximately \$38,870 annually),⁵ and

4. Reducing the renewal fee for Master Social Worker license renewal fee from \$195 to \$125 (a revenue loss of approximately \$191,800 annually).⁶

Section 13 is anticipated to result in a net total General Fund revenue loss of \$214,810 in FY 24 and a net a General Fund revenue loss of \$196,990 in FY 25 by:

1. Reducing the initial Marital and Family Therapist (MFT) license application fee from \$315 to \$200 (a revenue loss of approximately \$13,915 annually),⁷
2. Reducing the MFT license renewal fee from \$320 to \$200 (a revenue loss of approximately \$193,200 annually),⁸
3. Reducing the MFT Associate license renewal fee from \$220 to \$125 (a revenue loss of \$7,685 in FY 24 and even-numbered fiscal years),⁹ and
4. Changing the MFT Associate license renewal period from biennial to annual (a revenue gain of \$10,125 in FY 25 and odd-numbered fiscal years with a renewal fee of \$125).

Section 14 is anticipated to result in an annual General Fund revenue loss of \$104,610 beginning in FY 24 by:

1. Reducing the initial PC license application fee from \$315 to \$200 (a revenue loss of approximately \$52,785 annually),¹⁰
2. Reducing the initial PC Associate license application fee from \$220 to \$125, (a revenue loss of approximately \$30,020

⁵There are 7,774 Clinical Social Worker license renewals anticipated in FY 24.

⁶There are 2,740 Master Social Worker license renewals anticipated in FY 24.

⁷There were 121 initial MFT license applications in FY 22.

⁸There were 1,610 MFT license renewals in FY 22.

⁹There were 81 MFT Associate license renewals in FY 22.

¹⁰There were 459 initial PC license applications in FY 22.

annually),¹¹ and

3. Increasing the PC license renewal fee from \$195 to \$200 (a revenue gain of approximately \$17,885 annually),¹²
4. Reducing the PC Associate license renewal fee from \$195 to \$125 (a revenue loss of approximately \$39,690 annually).¹³

Section 15 requires the children's task force to review the efficacy of certain programs that received Coronavirus Aid and conduct a needs assessment resulting in no fiscal impact to the State because the task force has the expertise to carry out the requirements of the amendment.

Section 16 results in a cost to DSS in FY 24 by requiring the agency to hire temporary and part-time employees who will be responsible for collaborating with nonprofit organizations to identify and enroll eligible children in the HUSKY Health program. The extent of the cost is dependent on the number and level of staff hired by DSS but is assumed to include eligibility services workers at an annual salary range of \$60,448 to \$75,795 with associated fringe costs of \$25,900 to \$32,500 per person.

Section 17 results in potential costs of up to \$107,115 in FY 24 associated with the option for the State Department of Education (SDE) to hire an employee to administer a grant program. These costs include \$75,000 in salary and an associated \$32,115 in fringe benefits. Due to the temporary nature of the grant funding, it is anticipated that SDE will hire a durational employee, resulting in no cost to the agency in FY 25 and annually thereafter.

Section 18 extends the provision of public defender services to clients of the Department of Children and Families, beginning in FY 24, which results in an estimated cost of \$250,000 annually to the Public Defender Services Commission (PDS). Current eligibility for PDS services ends at

¹¹There were 316 PC Associate initial applications in FY 22.

¹²There are 3,577 PC license renewals anticipated in FY 24.

¹³There are 567 PC Associate license renewals anticipated in FY 24.

age 18. The amendment expands the age of eligibility to age 23.

Section 19 requires the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity to study community-based bereavement and grief counseling services in the State, resulting in a cost to the commission of \$50,000 in FY 24, and a corresponding fringe benefit cost of \$21,410 in FY 24. To meet the requirements of the study, the Commission will need to hire a durational project manager for approximately six months in FY 24.

Section 20 requires local and regional school districts to incorporate play-based learning into instructional time for kindergarten and preschool students, and to permit such instruction by teachers of grades one through five, beginning in FY 24. There is a potential minimal cost to local and regional school districts to the extent that this requires the purchase of any materials or supplies needed to facilitate play-based learning.

Section 21 establishes an advisory committee to OBHA to: (1) review and assess the performance of OBHA, and (2) submit a list of recommended candidates to the Governor for the initial Behavioral Health Advocate position and to fill any subsequent vacancies. This has no fiscal impact because it is anticipated that the advisory committee will have the expertise to meet the requirements of the amendment.

Section 22 adds responsibilities that may be undertaken by the Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council that are not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact.

Section 23 makes various changes to the requirements of the social and emotional learning and school climate advisory collaborative, resulting in no fiscal impact to the State, because the collaborative has the expertise to meet the requirements of the amendment.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation, changes to state employee

salaries and benefits, the extent to which state library grants do not adhere to certain collection reconsideration policies, the amount of general administrative payments made to Birth to Three providers, utilization of Medicaid-covered services, the Medicaid rate established for suicide risk assessments and mental health evaluations, the number of applicable initial and renewal licenses issued by DPH, whether or not SDE chooses to hire an employee to administer a grant program, the number of DCF clients eligible for extended PDS services, and the materials or supplies that may need to be purchased by local and regional school districts to facilitate play-based learning.

The preceding Fiscal Impact statement is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for the purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.