



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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February 7, 2018

TO: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

FROM: Bob Lang, Director

SUBJECT: Assembly Bill 785 and Senate Bill 658: Funding for Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Grants

Assembly Bill 785 was introduced on December 27, 2017, and referred to the Committee on Children and Families. That committee held a public hearing on the bill on January 17 and an executive session on January 31. The committee adopted Assembly Amendment 1 by a vote of 10-0 and recommended the bill, as amended, for passage by a vote of 10-0. An identical bill, Senate Bill 658, was introduced in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety. On February 2, the bill was withdrawn from that Committee and referred to the Joint Committee on Finance.

CURRENT LAW

In Wisconsin, the child welfare system is county-operated and state-supervised, except in Milwaukee County, where the system is administered by the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) in the Department of Children and Families (DCF). At the state level, DCF is responsible for providing statewide leadership and supervision of child welfare standards and practices. DCF administers state and federal funds for child welfare services and assures compliance with state and federal regulations. At the local level, each county (except for Milwaukee) has its own child welfare system that includes the county department of human or social services, the courts, and other resources within the community. The CPS unit in each county department is responsible for providing services to abused and neglected children.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal block grant that can be used to support a wide variety of public assistance programs. TANF funding may be used to provide assistance that addresses a child's needs during a period of temporary absence from the home or for a child welfare program that furthers the goals of TANF (such as providing assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes). The biennial budget provides TANF funding of approximately \$6.3 million in 2017-18 and \$7.3 million in 2018-19 for child welfare

safety services and approximately \$5.3 million annually for child welfare prevention services (such as the brighter futures program in Milwaukee and the Family Foundations Home Visiting program throughout the state).

SUMMARY OF BILL AND ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT 1

The bill would annually allocate \$500,000 of TANF funding to DCF to award grants to counties, nonprofit organizations, or tribes to fund child abuse and neglect prevention services. DCF would be required to award the grants with the purpose of encouraging innovative practices aimed at reducing the contact that families may have with the child welfare system and preventing the removal of children from their homes. Grant recipients would be required to provide matching funds equal to 9.89 percent of the amount awarded. DCF would be required to evaluate the grant program and, starting June 30, 2021, and in each odd-numbered year thereafter, report on the evaluation to the appropriate standing committees of the Legislature.

Assembly Amendment 1 modifies the bill to increase DCF's federal block grant aids appropriation by \$500,000 in fiscal years 2017-18 and 2018-19 in order to fund the grant program. Under current law, the ending TANF balance as of June 30, 2019, is projected to be \$153.1 million. In 2018-19, expenditures are projected to exceed revenue by \$57.8 million. Assuming the same level of spending and revenue in the next biennium, the ending balance for the 2020-21 fiscal year would be \$37.3 million.

Prepared by: John Gentry