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H.B. 865
136th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

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Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsors: Reps. T. Mathews and A. White

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

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Highlights

- The Department of Children and Youth (DCY) will likely experience an increase in information technology costs to establish a password-protected database for profiles of adoptable children. These costs would depend on several factors including whether the work is contracted or conducted by staff.
- Public children services agencies (PCSAs) may experience a minimal increase in costs to create or adjust adoption profiles to comply with the bill's requirements, to post certain materials on their websites, and to submit certain adoption data to DCY.
- DCY may experience a minimal increase in costs to develop a general description of adoption processes if not currently available, to prepare the required annual report, and to adopt rules regarding the profiles database.

Detailed Analysis

Department of Children and Youth central database

The bill regulates the publication of profiles of adoptable children and the information that may be included in such profiles. Under the bill, the Department of Children and Youth (DCY) is required to establish and maintain on its "It Takes Heart" adoption initiative website a centralized database that publishes the profiles of children who are available for placement with qualified adoptive parents. DCY is required to remove a child's profile at the child's request and periodically remove profiles of children who are either 18 years old or older or have been adopted or are in a permanent placement. The bill specifies that only DCY may publish profiles of adoptable children. The profiles must be prepared by public children services agencies (PCSAs), private child placing agencies (PCPAs), private noncustodial agencies (PNAs), or attorneys. The bill outlines requirements that PCSAs, PCPAs, PNAs, and attorneys must follow when creating adoption profiles.

The database is prohibited from being publicly accessible except by qualified adoptive parents with a password-protected account. A qualified adoptive parent must have completed all required training and have an approved and unexpired home study in order to create an account. DCY must maintain verification of a qualified adoptive parent's training and approved home study.¹ The bill permits the DCY Director to adopt rules to implement the bill's requirements regarding the database and publication of adoptable children profiles.

Fiscal impact

Currently, numerous websites post profiles of children who are available for adoption in Ohio, including DCY, PCSA, and PCPA websites. DCY will likely experience an increase in information technology costs to establish a password-protected database for profiles of adoptable children. These costs will depend on several factors including whether the work is contracted or conducted by current staff. DCY also may realize a minimal increase in costs to adopt rules. Additionally, the bill's requirements may result in minimal costs to PCSAs to adjust a child's existing profile to comply with the bill's restrictions on what may be included in the profile, create a profile for a child who does not currently have one (with the child's consent), remove profiles from their websites, and to send profile information to DCY for publication in the database.

PCSA duties

The bill also decreases the amount of time a PCSA has to respond to adoption inquiries. The bill requires a PCSA that receives a request for adoption information or an application for adoption to respond to the requestor within three business days instead of the current seven business days rule. Additionally, DCY must prepare a general description of adoption processes and procedures for use by each PCSA to be published on PCSA websites. Each PCSA website must include certain links and information, including the most recent publication of DCY's Ohio Adoption Guide and the "It Takes Heart" website. Lastly, the bill requires each PCSA to report the following information annually to DCY: (1) the total number of children adopted in the previous calendar year, (2) the total number of children available for adoption and their ages, and (3) the total number of grants awarded under the Ohio Adoption Program, sorted by the grant award amount. DCY must compile a report of the information received to be submitted to the General Assembly annually.

Fiscal impact

The bill's provision requiring a PCSA to respond to adoption inquiries within three days should not increase costs, though it may shift workload depending on the number of inquiries received. PCSAs may experience a minimal increase in costs to post the required materials on their websites and to submit the required information to DCY. DCY may also experience a minimal increase in costs to develop the general description of adoption processes and to prepare the required report.

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¹ Foster and adoptive parent training and home studies are tracked in the statewide automated child welfare information system (SACWIS). Users like PCSA staff record information in the system, which is managed by DCY.