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Fiscal Note

Drafting Number: LLS 24-0348
Prime Sponsors:

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Bill Status: Bill Draft
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Bill Topic: **CHILD WELFARE WORKER TASK FORCE**

Summary of Fiscal Impact:	<input type="checkbox"/> State Revenue	<input type="checkbox"/> TABOR Refund
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State Expenditure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Government
	<input type="checkbox"/> State Transfer	<input type="checkbox"/> Statutory Public Entity

The bill creates the Child Welfare Worker Task Force in the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman. The bill increases state and local expenditures from FY 2024-25 through FY 2026-27.

Appropriation Summary: For FY 2024-25, the bill requires an appropriation of \$142,874 to the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman.

Fiscal Note Status: The fiscal note reflects the bill draft requested by the Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee.

Table 1
State Fiscal Impacts Under Bill 8

		Budget Year FY 2024-25	Out Year FY 2025-26	Out Year FY 2026-27
Revenue		-	-	-
Expenditures	General Fund	\$142,874	\$302,255	\$145,781
	Centrally Appropriated	\$16,414	\$39,243	\$24,881
	Total Expenditures	\$159,288	\$341,498	\$170,662
	Total FTE	0.8 FTE	2.0 FTE	1.3 FTE
Transfers		-	-	-
Other Budget Impacts	General Fund Reserve	\$21,431	\$45,338	\$21,867

Summary of Legislation

The bill creates the Child Welfare Worker Task Force within the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman (OCPO) to analyze child welfare worker training, certification, and grievance procedures; and to develop accountability standards for child welfare workers. The task force must convene its first meeting by October 1, 2024, and must meet at least 24 times until the task force submits its final report by November 1, 2026. The task force must also submit a first-year status report by November 1, 2025.

State Expenditures

The bill will increase General Fund expenditures in the OCPO and CDHS by \$159,000 in FY 2024-25, \$341,000 in FY 2025-26, and \$171,000 in FY 2026-27, as shown in Table 2 and detailed below.

Table 2
Expenditures Under Bill 8

	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27
Child Protection Ombudsman			
Personal Services	\$76,850	\$96,062	\$28,819
Operating Expenses	\$1,024	\$1,280	\$384
Capital Outlay Costs	\$6,670	-	-
Facilitator	\$58,330	\$94,996	\$33,332
Centrally Appropriated Costs ¹	\$16,414	\$20,518	\$6,155
FTE – Personal Services	0.8 FTE	1.0 FTE	0.3 FTE
OCPO Cost	\$159,288	\$212,856	\$68,690
Department of Human Services			
Personal Services	-	\$76,967	\$76,967
Operating Expenses	-	\$1,280	\$1,280
Capital Outlay Costs	-	\$6,670	-
IT Modifications	-	\$25,000	\$5,000
Centrally Appropriated Costs ¹	-	\$18,725	\$18,725
FTE – Personal Services	-	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE
CDHS Cost	-	\$128,642	\$101,972
Total Cost	\$159,288	\$341,498	\$170,662
Total FTE	0.8 FTE	2.0 FTE	1.3 FTE

¹Centrally appropriated costs are not included in the bill's appropriation.

Child Protection Ombudsman. General Fund expenditures in the OCPO will increase from FY 2024-25 through FY 2026-27 to hire staff to support the task force and to contract with a facilitator to facilitate task force meetings, as described below.

- **Staff.** From September 1, 2024 through November 1, 2026, the OCPO requires 1.0 FTE to coordinate task force meetings; identify, recruit, and secure experts to attend meetings; prepare research and data; provide agendas; coordinate any subcommittee meetings; and to draft required reports. FTE is prorated in FY 2024-25 and FY 2026-27 based on the task force start and end dates. Staff costs are shown in Table 2 and include personal services, operating expenses, and capital outlay costs.
- **Facilitator.** Due to the size of the task force and the number of topics the task force must discuss, the OCPO will require a facilitator to help run meetings. Based on facilitator costs for other committees and information from potential vendors, the fiscal note estimates that contracting with a facilitator will increase costs by a total of about \$186,000 across three fiscal years, as shown in Table 2 above. Costs in FY 2024-25 and FY 2026-27 reflect partial year impacts.

Department of Human Services. Starting in FY 2025-26, costs in the CDHS may increase to hire additional staff and modify existing databases to create a public-facing data base, as described below.

- **Staff.** Because the bill requires that a public-facing database documenting the certification status of child welfare workers be developed, the CDHS will require 1.0 FTE starting in FY 2025-26 to oversee development of the database, and then to enter and update data in the new database using information submitted by counties. This staff will also communicate with county departments on training requirements and issues related to lapse of certifications.
- **IT Modifications.** Depending on the exact recommendations from the task force concerning the public-facing database, costs in the CDHS will increase to update their Learning Management System to capture the data required by the task force. Preliminarily, it is estimated that IT modifications will cost \$25,000 in upgrades and then \$5,000 per year to maintain the database. Costs may vary depending on the exact recommendation for information that must be captured in the database. It is assumed that any work on the database will not begin until FY 2025-26.

Other state agencies. Starting in FY 2024-25 through FY 2026-27, workload will increase in the various state agencies required to participate on the task force. It is assumed that these agencies can participate on the task force within existing appropriations.

Governor's Office. Workload will minimally increase for the Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions to make the required appointment under the bill. This work can be accomplished within existing appropriations.

Centrally appropriated costs. Pursuant to a Joint Budget Committee policy, certain costs associated with this bill are addressed through the annual budget process and centrally appropriated in the Long Bill or supplemental appropriations bills, rather than in this bill. These costs, which include employee insurance and supplemental employee retirement payments, are shown in Table 2.

Other Budget Impacts

General Fund reserve. Under current law, an amount equal to 15 percent of General Fund appropriations must be set aside in the General Fund statutory reserve. Based on this fiscal note, the bill is expected to increase the amount of General Fund held in reserve by the amounts shown in Table 1, decreasing the amount of General Fund available for other purposes.

Local Government

Similar to the state, from FY 2024-25 through FY 2027, workload for county departments of human services will increase for those counties sending a representative to the task force. In addition, once the public-facing database of child welfare certifications is developed, counties will have additional workload to ensure that required information on child welfare workers is included in the database.

Effective Date

The bill takes effect 90 days following adjournment of the General Assembly sine die, assuming no referendum petition is filed.

State Appropriations

For FY 2024-25, the bill requires a General Fund appropriation of \$142,874 to the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman in the Judicial Department, and 0.8 FTE.

State and Local Government Contacts

Counties
Information Technology

District Attorneys
Judicial

Human Services
Regulatory Agencies