

**SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
FISCAL NOTE**

BILL NO. House Bill 2426

PRINTER NO. 2836

AMOUNT

See Fiscal Impact

FUND

General Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

March 16, 2022

PRIME SPONSOR

Representative Hickernell

DESCRIPTION

House Bill 2426 moves the provisions of two freestanding acts relating to resource (or foster) families to a new chapter in Title 67.

The bill enumerates certain responsibilities of a county agency or contracted private foster care agency regarding communication and consultation with, as well as provision of information, services and training to, a resource parent.

The bill prohibits retaliation or adverse action against a resource parent for making any appropriate inquiry regarding decisions or practices affecting the child or for any appropriate communication pursuant to the Juvenile Act (Chapter 63 of Title 42).

The bill provides that a placing agency must interview a resource parent as a potential adoptive parent when the resource parent has expressed interest in adopting a child who has lived with the resource parent for at least six months and the child's permanency goal is adoption, or the child has been in foster care for at least 15 of the preceding 22 months. If more than one adoptive resource is available, the agency must document the reasons for its recommendation in the child's case record and make that information available to the resource parent.

The bill requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to promulgate regulations as necessary to ensure compliance with the chapter.

This act shall take effect in 60 days.

FISCAL IMPACT:

According to DHS, enactment of this legislation will require county agencies or their contractors to hire an additional 135 caseworkers and 27 supervisors at an annual cost of approximately \$17.8 million in state funds and \$4.5 million in county funds. However, these provisions have been in statute since 2005 and were estimated to have a one-time training cost of no more than \$150,000 at the time of enactment. Therefore, any increased cost following DHS regulations to ensure compliance should be minimal.