

Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office

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FISCAL NOTE

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DRAFT – For discussion purposes only

H.265 An act relating to the Office of the Child Advocate – Draft 4.2

As recommended by the House Committee on Human Services (NOT YET PASSED)

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2022/H.265>

Sec. 1 - Oversight Commission on Children, Youth and Families

Sec. 1 of the bill would create the Oversight Commission on Children, Youths, and Families to provide guidance and recommendations to the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family (created in Sec. 2). The Commission would have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Agency of Administration (AOA). In addition to the Executive Director of Racial Equity, the Commission would have 2 legislators and 6 other members, all of whom would be eligible to receive per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as allowed under the statutes for up to 4 meetings per year. It is estimated that per diems and reimbursement would cost approximately \$4,800.00 annually.

Fiscal Impact – Sec. 1:

- *Est. FY 2022: \$4,800.00 for per diems and reimbursement*

Sec. 2 - Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate

Sec. 2 of the bill would establish the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate for the purpose of advancing the interests and welfare of all Vermont's children and youths, in a manner that addresses racial and social equity, including providing transparent and impartial oversight of the child protection and juvenile justice systems and promoting reforms necessary to better serve Vermont's children, youths, and families. The Office would act independently of any State agency in performing its duties.

The Office would be directed by the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate, which would be a full-time exempt position within State government. The Advocate would be appointed by the Governor (from among applicants recommended by the Oversight Commission) and be subject to confirmation by the Senate. The Office would also have a Deputy Advocate. The estimated ranges for salaries and benefits are as following:

Job	Salary Est.	Benefits & FICA Est. ¹	Other	Total Gross Est.
Child, Youth, and Family Advocate	\$75,000 - \$100,000	\$15,000 - \$33,000	N/A	\$90,000 - \$133,000
Deputy Advocate	\$60,000 - \$80,000	\$15,000 - \$31,000	N/A	\$75,000 - \$111,000

There would also be administrative expenses associated with these positions which include costs for equipment, travel, information technology and telecom, purchased services and other expenses which could cost as much as \$10,000.00. Additionally, costs for space can range from \$10,000.00 to \$20,000.00 annually depending on the size and location of the space.

Further, the Office may need to hire an administrative assistant to support the Advocate and Deputy Advocate with the day to day functions of the office. This position could range from \$30,000.00 to \$60,000.00 annually depending on the levels of salary and benefits and whether this is a part-time or full-time position.

Child, Youth, and Family Advisory Council

Sec. 2 of the bill would also create the Child, Youth, and Family Advisory Council, to provide advice and guidance to the Office. The Advisory Council would be composed of stakeholders who have been impacted by child welfare services provided by DCF and other State agencies. The bill allows for Advisory Council members to be compensated in accordance with the policies adopted by the office but is not specific regarding to the number of Advisory Council members, the number of meetings, or the amount of compensation. Given these unknowns, it is estimated per diems could cost between \$2,000.00 and \$5,000.00 annually.

Fiscal Impact – Sec. 2:

- *Est. FY 2022: \$94,000.00 to \$169,500.00 (January 1, 2022 effective date)*
 - *It is estimated the cost of the Office as envisioned in this bill could cost between \$188,000.00 and \$339,000 annually.*

Office of the Child, Youth and Family Advocate		
Estimated Budget (Range)	Low	High
Salaries and Wages	\$135,000	\$180,000
Fring Benefits	\$30,000	\$64,000
Rented property / space	\$10,000	\$20,000
Other (equipment, travel, IT/telecom, purchased services, other)	\$10,000	\$10,000
Per Diems for Advisory Council Members	\$3,000	\$5,000
Administrative Position	\$0	\$60,000
	<i>Annualized</i>	<i>\$188,000</i>
	<i>January 1, 2022 Effective Date</i>	<i>\$94,000</i>
		<i>\$339,000</i>
		<i>\$169,500</i>

Sec. 6 - Appropriation

Sec. 6 would appropriate \$X.00 to the AOA from the General Funds for carrying out the purposes of this act.