

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2024 Legislative Session

Bill Version: SB 181
Fiscal Note Number:
() Publish Date:

Identifier: SB181-FCS-FLSW-02-09-2024
Title: CHILD PLACEMENT; DILIGENT SEARCH
Sponsor: BJORKMAN
Requester: Senate Health and Social Services

Department: Department of Family and Community Services
Appropriation: Children's Services
Allocation: Front Line Social Workers
OMB Component Number: 3318

Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

(Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2025 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2025 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
			FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2025	FY 2025					
Personal Services			123.0	123.0	123.0	123.0	123.0
Travel							
Services			720.0	700.0	700.0	700.0	700.0
Commodities			7.0				
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
Total Operating	0.0	0.0	850.0	823.0	823.0	823.0	823.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

1002 Fed Rcpts (Fed)		35.6	33.6	33.6	33.6	33.6
1003 GF/Match (UGF)		26.7	25.2	25.2	25.2	25.2
1004 Gen Fund (UGF)		787.7	764.2	764.2	764.2	764.2
Total	0.0	0.0	850.0	823.0	823.0	823.0

Positions

Full-time		2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Part-time						
Temporary						

Change in Revenues

None							
Total	0.0						

Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2024) cost: 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2025) cost: 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*

Does the bill create or modify a new fund or account? No

(Supplemental/Capital/New Fund - discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? No
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? NA

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:

This is an initial version.

Prepared By:
Division:
Approved By:
Agency:

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Date: 02/09/2024 01:00 PM
Date: 02/09/24

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA
2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. SB181

Analysis

Senate Bill 181 will have a large fiscal impact on the Office of Children's Services. The bill will lead to a considerable increase in legal services, require new full-time staff, and necessitate an update to the case management database.

Total Costs:

\$687.0 in legal services (services)
\$123.0 in personnel costs (personal services)
\$20.0 in one-time programming costs (services)
\$13.0 in position chargeback costs (services)
\$7.0 in position IT equipment and additional office supplies

Legal Services:

SB181 makes several significant changes to Child in Need of Aid (CINA) statute that will lead to increases in court hearings, legal fees, discovery expenses, and ultimately delay permanency for children in the child protection system.
-SB181 provides foster parents the right to request court hearings when the department seeks to transfer a child to another placement which will lead to increased court expenses.
-SB181 adds new "best interest" determinations into placement and permanency decisions by the department, replacing existing practices.
-SB151 adds new requirements on how the department conducts search for family members of children who come into state custody. The new search requirements will require additional court hearings on diligent search efforts.
-SB151 changes the existing statutory placement preference to give some foster parents equal preference to adult family members. This change has the potential to lead to extensive litigation.

The fiscal implications of SB181 on the department legal services is difficult to estimate. CINA statute is heavily litigated and placement decisions are the most litigated issues in CINA proceedings. The inclusion of foster parents as parties for CINA proceeding and the changes to placement preference will greatly increase litigation cost. Based upon initial estimates the increase in legal fees is an additional \$687.0.

Diligent Relative Search:

SB181 creates a new diligent search requirement, with extensive court reporting, and adds the ability for the court to excuse the department from continuing to search for relatives. The division currently conducts extensive relative search, however the new requirements for documentation and reporting of these efforts are substantial, requiring the addition of 2 FTE Social Service Associate (Range 12 A) at \$123.0 total.

The new reporting requirements will require changes to the division's Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System. Given the age of the current system, it is expensive to implement any changes. The division estimates \$20.0 in contract costs to design, develop, and test the required upgrades as well as create new reports.

The new diligent search statute requires the department to provide notice to families "that is written in the family member's native language." The department has not estimated the costs to comply with this provision.

Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact Renegotiation

The additional requirements for diligent relative search will apply to the services under the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact. These changes will require renegotiation of the scope of work and may lead to a reduction of services.

Delay in Permanency Outcomes

The increase in court hearings and litigation resulting from SB181 will ultimately delay the permanency for children in state custody. The department has not estimated the cost to the department of these delays.