



## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

# FISCAL NOTE

HOUSE BILL NO. 2175

PRINTER'S NO. 3305

PRIME SPONSOR: Sappey

### COST / (SAVINGS)

FUND	FY 2024/25	FY 2025/26
General Fund	See Fiscal Impact	See Fiscal Impact

### SUMMARY:

This legislation amends the Human Services Code to establish the Office of the Child Advocate within the Department of Human Services.

### ANALYSIS:

House Bill 2175, Printer's Number 3305, establishes the Office of the Child Advocate (Office) within the Department of Human Services. This Office will operate under the direction of the Child Advocate and will function independently from the department with regard to the Office's decision-making functions.

The Child Advocate will be appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, and will hold office for a term of four years and until a successor is duly appointed, which is limited to 90 days upon expiration of the appointed term. The Child Advocate can be reappointed for additional terms. Compensation for the Child Advocate will be set by the executive board.

Upon request of the Child Advocate, the department will make available facilities, administrative support and other clerical, technical and professional staff, as may be available within the budget of the department. Legal counsel for the Office will be appointed in accordance with Act 164 of 1980, known as the Commonwealth Attorneys Act.

This legislation also provides for the powers and duties of the Office, which include:

- Advocate for and advance the interests of children by supporting and enhancing child health, safety and well-being programs.
- Serve as a resource to connect children and families with child health, safety and well-being programs.
- Perform outreach to youth advocates and professional organizations involved with facility placements and access.
- Consult with executive agencies, county agencies and individuals with lived experience on child health, safety and well-being programs.
- Conduct visits to facilities.
- Participate as a member of all child fatality or near fatality review teams.

- Coordinate educational, informational and other programs for public awareness and education concerning child maltreatment and the role of the community in supporting and strengthening families and keeping children safe.
- Receive and review complaints from the public and make referrals and recommendations.
- Review and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the state and local compliant processes for child health, safety, and well-being programs.
- Accompany a child who is subject to child protective services to interviews and administrative hearings.
- Complete an annual report summarizing the Child Advocate’s activities and accomplishments.

This legislation will take effect in 60 days upon enactment.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The position for the Child Advocate has been in place since 2019<sup>1</sup> within the Office of Advocacy and Reform and is currently filled. Based on this legislation, the Child Advocate would be moved to the Office of the Child Advocate within the Department of Human Services. Additionally, the department is required to make available facilities, administrative support and other clerical, technical and professional staff, as may be available within the budget of the department at the request of the Child Advocate. The estimated increase in administrative costs for the department, as a result of the Office of the Child Advocate, will depend on the administrative resources needed, which have not been determined at this time. Therefore, the fiscal impact to the commonwealth, as a result of the establishment of the Office of the Child Advocate within the Department of Human Services, is indeterminate.

**PREPARED BY:** Mara Perez, Senior Budget Analyst  
House Appropriations Committee (D)

**DATE:** July 1, 2024

*Estimates are calculated using the best information available. Actual costs and revenue impact incurred may vary from estimates.*

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<sup>1</sup> Governor’s Executive Order 2019-05, Protection of Vulnerable Populations, page 2.