



2017 SENATE BILL 656

December 21, 2017 - Introduced by Senators TESTIN, JOHNSON, LARSON, L. TAYLOR and VINEHOUT, cosponsored by Representatives MEYERS, NEYLON, SUBECK, KATSMAN, BILLINGS, KITCHENS, CROWLEY, BALLWEG, DOYLE, RODRIGUEZ, SNYDER, NOVAK, PRONSCHINSKE, ANDERSON, BERCEAU, E. BROOKS, BROSTOFF, FELZKOWSKI, FIELDS, JAGLER, KRUG, KULP, OHNSTAD, PETERSEN, PETRYK, RIPP, ROHRKASTE, SARGENT, SCHRAA, SHANKLAND, SINICKI, SPREITZER, STEINEKE, SWEARINGEN, TAUCHEN, THIESFELDT, TITTL, TRANEL, VANDERMEER, VRUWINK, ZAMARRIPA and ZEPNICK. Referred to Committee on Government Operations, Technology and Consumer Protection.

- 1 **AN ACT relating to:** a committee to study and make recommendations on the
2 caseloads of child welfare workers.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill requires the Department of Children and Families to create a committee, named the "Wisconsin Task Force to Create Effective Child Welfare Caseloads," to study and report on recommended caseload standards for child welfare workers. Under the bill, the committee must consist of 16 members, including ten representatives of the Wisconsin County Human Service Association, five representatives of DCF, and one representative of a federally recognized Indian tribe in this state appointed by the DCF secretary.

The bill requires the committee to submit a written report to the governor, the Joint Committee on Finance, and the appropriate standing committees of the legislature no later than April 1, 2019. The report must include recommended standards for the maximum average caseload sizes for child welfare workers who perform access, initial assessment, ongoing services, or foster parent support functions, over which it is not reasonable to expect a worker to be effective at conducting certain model practices while at the same time meeting the federal and state mandates that govern his or her work, and the maximum ratio of supervisors to frontline workers over which it is not reasonable to expect a supervisor to provide effective guidance and direction.

The bill requires the committee to develop its recommendations based on a review of existing caseload standards in other states and local jurisdictions and pertinent research on the subject and with a consideration towards retaining quality

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staff, mitigating secondary trauma, and ensuring county child welfare systems are able to fulfill their purpose of keeping children safe, achieving timely permanency outcomes, and providing for the well-being of children and families. The bill requires the committee's report to include an outline of how the recommended standards could be implemented, including the funding needed for implementation.

For further information see the *state* fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

1 **SECTION 1. Nonstatutory provisions.**

2 (1) WISCONSIN TASK FORCE TO CREATE EFFECTIVE CHILD WELFARE CASELOADS.

3 (a) The department of children and families shall create a committee named
4 the "Wisconsin Task Force to Create Effective Child Welfare Caseloads" to study and
5 report on recommended caseload standards for child welfare workers in this state.

6 (b) The committee under paragraph (a) shall consist of 16 members, including
7 all of the following:

8 1. Ten representatives of the Wisconsin County Human Service Association,
9 including at least one from each of the 2 department of children and families regions.

10 2. Five representatives of the department of children and families, including
11 2 from the division of Milwaukee child protective services.

12 3. One representative of a federally recognized Indian tribe in this state,
13 appointed by the secretary of children and families.

14 (c) Two members of the committee under paragraph (a) shall preside as
15 cochairpersons. The department of children and families shall appoint one of its
16 representatives under paragraph (b) 2. as a cochairperson, and the Wisconsin
17 County Human Service Association shall appoint one of its representatives under
18 paragraph (b) 1. as a cochairperson.

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1 (d) The committee under paragraph (a) shall convene for its first meeting no
2 later than 3 months after the effective date of this paragraph.

3 (e) The committee under paragraph (a) shall develop recommendations for
4 child welfare worker caseload standards based on a review of existing caseload
5 standards in other states and local jurisdictions and pertinent research on the
6 subject. The committee may consult with organizations with expertise on the
7 subject, such as Casey Family Programs. The committee's findings, conclusions, and
8 recommendations shall be in the form of a written report from the committee
9 cochairpersons.

10 (f) The report under paragraph (e) shall include recommendations for all of the
11 following standards:

12 1. Subject to paragraphs (g) and (h), the maximum average caseload size for
13 child welfare workers who perform each of the following functions:

14 a. Access.

15 b. Initial assessment.

16 c. Ongoing services.

17 d. Foster parent support.

18 2. Subject to paragraph (h), the maximum ratio of supervisors to frontline
19 workers over which it is not reasonable to expect a supervisor to provide effective
20 guidance and direction.

21 (g) The caseload standards under paragraph (f) 1. shall be the maximum
22 average caseload sizes over which it is not reasonable to expect a worker to be
23 effective at the following practices while at the same time meeting the federal and
24 state mandates that govern his or her work:

25 1. Engagement, trust, and relationship-building.

