



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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April 23, 2009

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #453

### **Birth Certificate Fee Increase (DHS -- Public Health/DCF -- Children and Families)**

[LFB 2009-11 Budget Summary: Page 148, #15 and Page 376, #5]

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#### **CURRENT LAW**

Chapter 69 of the statutes establishes fees that the state and local registrars charge for copies of vital records and services associated with the provision of those records. Vital records include certificates of birth, death, marriage and divorce, and services for which the state registrar may charge a fee include changing information on a child's birth certificate to reflect paternity, verification of an event without issuing a copy of a vital record, and expedited service.

2007 Wisconsin Act 20 increased the fee for a certified or uncertified copy of a birth certificate from \$12 to \$20, and included a sunset provision on July 1, 2010, when the fees would return to \$12 per copy. The state registrar transfers \$7 of each fee collected to the Child Abuse Neglect and Prevention Board (the CANP Board); local registrars are required to transfer \$7 of each fee collected to the CANP Board, and \$8 of each fee collected to the state vital records program.

#### **GOVERNOR**

Repeal the July 1, 2010, sunset provision, and increase fees for a certified or uncertified copy of a birth certificate to \$22. Additionally, raise the fee charged for each additional copy of a birth certificate issued at the same time as the first copy from \$3 to \$5. The state registrar would transfer a portion of this additional \$2 to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to support activities related to a foster care public information campaign (\$155,600 PR annually), and a portion to the Department of Health Services to support certain activities related to maternal and child health (\$150,400 PR annually). Local registrars would retain the revenue generated by the additional \$2 fee increase. The funding for DHS maternal and child health

activities is double-counted in the DHS budget, first as an increase to the Division of Public Health's licensing and certification appropriation, and then as an increase to the Division's interagency and intra-agency appropriation.

## **DISCUSSION POINTS**

1. This paper discusses the provisions in the Governor's budget that would increase the fee charged for birth certificates by an additional \$2 and the proposed uses of that revenue. LFB Issue Paper #453 ("Repeal of Vital Records Sunset Provision") discusses the repeal of the sunset provision for other vital records, and the vital records automated system.

2. The statewide vital records program includes the state registrar, 74 local registrars (72 county registrars and the Milwaukee and West Allis health offices), and business partners such as hospitals, funeral directors, and coroners. Chapter 69 of the statutes assigns a broad range of responsibilities to the state registrar with respect to the state's vital records system, including the responsibility to accept for registration, assign a date of acceptance, index, and preserve original birth, death, marriage, and divorce documents. Information in the vital records system is also used to help administer public health programs, facilitate population estimates, assist law enforcement investigations, and prevent fraud in public programs.

3. The state and local registrars issue certified and uncertified copies of birth certificates. Individuals often require certified copies of vital records to obtain official documents, enroll in school, obtain life insurance benefits, or to enforce child support obligations. Individuals also use the vital records office as a source for genealogical information. A fee is charged for certified or uncertified copies of these records, as well as certain services related to these records.

4. 2007 Wisconsin Act 20 increased the fee charged for copies of vital records, including an increase from \$12 to \$20 for a certified or uncertified copy of a birth certificate. The \$3 fee for an additional copy of a birth certificate issued at the same time as the first copy was not affected by Act 20.

5. Seven dollars of every fee charged for a certified or uncertified copy of a birth certificate is forwarded to the CANP Board. This amount transferred to the CANP Board was last increased in the 1995-97 biennium, when 1995 Wisconsin Act 27 (the biennial budget) increased the fee for a copy of a birth certificate from \$10 to \$12, and the amount transferred to the CANP Board from \$5 to \$7. This transfer does not apply to additional copies issued at the same time as the first copy.

6. For each \$20 fee charged for a copy of a birth certificate, local registrars transfer \$7 to the CANP Board, transfer \$8 to the state vital records appropriation, and retain \$5. DHS estimates that in 2008-09, local registrars will generate \$3,353,600 in fees charged for first copies of birth certificates. Counties are projected to transfer \$1,173,800 to the CANP Board, transfer \$1,341,400 to the state vital records program, and retain \$838,400. This does not include the \$3 fee charged for additional copies issued at the same time; counties keep all fee revenue generated from

the sale of additional copies.

7. The bill would increase fees charged for first and additional certified and uncertified copies of birth certificates by \$2. This would increase fee levels to \$22 for the first certified or uncertified copy, and \$5 for each additional copy. It is estimated that an additional \$306,000 in annual revenue would be generated by birth certificates sold by the state registrar. This additional revenue would be transferred to other programs in the DHS and DCF.

8. DHS also charges DCF for access to birth records for the purposes of paternity actions, and federal child support and income maintenance purposes. The federal government pays 66% of the cost of these searches, and the vital records program covers the state portion of the charge. The amount that is charged for this birth history access would increase by \$1.32 per record under the bill, and would generate an additional \$330,000 annually, to be credited to the vital records appropriation.

9. Fees for copies of birth certificates sold by local registrars would also be increased to \$22 for the first copy, and \$5 for additional copies issued at the same time. Counties would retain any additional revenue generated by this increase. The administration estimates that counties would generate and retain \$1,086,600 in additional annual revenue due to this fee increase. The bill would not affect the amount transferred to the CANP Board (\$7 per first copy), or the fee revenue that is currently transferred to the state vital records appropriation (\$8 per first copy).

10. Table 1 provides the history of the birth certificate fees and the transfer to the CANP Board, by biennium since 1985-87. The table shows the levels that existed at the end of each biennium, reflecting any changes that were made in those two fiscal years.

**TABLE 1**

**History of Fees Charged for Copies of Birth Certificates, and Transfers to the CANP Board**

Biennium	First Certified or Uncertified Copy of a Birth <u>Certificate</u>	Additional Copy Issues at Same Time as First Copy	Amount Transferred to CANP from Fee for First Copy
1985-87	\$7.00	\$2.00	\$2.00
1987-89	8.00	2.00	3.00
1989-91	8.00	2.00	3.00
1991-93	10.00	2.00	5.00
1993-95	10.00	2.00	5.00
1995-97	12.00	2.00	7.00
1997-99	12.00	2.00	7.00
1999-01	12.00	2.00	7.00
2001-03	12.00	3.00	7.00
2003-05	12.00	3.00	7.00
2005-07	12.00	3.00	7.00
2007-09	20.00	3.00	7.00
2009-11 (Proposed)	22.00	5.00	7.00

11. Table 2 shows the fee charged for copies of birth certificates in Wisconsin currently, the fees if this provision is approved, and the fees charged in several other states.

**TABLE 2**

**Comparison of Fees in Wisconsin and Other States**

	Certified Copy of Birth <u>Certificate</u>	Additional Copy Issued at the <u>Same Time</u>
Illinois	\$15.00	\$2.00
Indiana	10.00	4.00
Iowa	15.00	15.00
Michigan	26.00	12.00
Minnesota	16.00	16.00
Ohio	16.50	16.50
Wisconsin, Current	20.00	3.00
Wisconsin, Proposed	22.00	5.00

## **Maternal and Child Health Activities**

12. The healthy birth outcomes program in DHS addresses racial and ethnic disparities in infant mortality, premature births, and prenatal care. The bill would provide \$150,400 annually, funded with a portion of the \$2 increase in the fee for a copy of a birth certificate, to support activities in the healthy birth outcomes program, several of which involve home visitation services. The Department submitted certain recommendations for how this additional funding could possibly be used, as described below.

a. Collaborate with the Family Foundations home visiting program in DCF to target high-risk pregnant women who require prenatal services. This program currently provides voluntary early childhood home visitation services to first-time Medicaid eligible mothers of children identified as at risk for abuse or neglect. This proposal would include healthy birth outcomes as a goal of the family foundations program. The proposed collaboration would involve providing a risk assessment tool to identify pregnant women with a prior history of poor birth outcomes, and developing a referral process for existing programs for high-risk pregnant women.

b. Expand the Empowering Families of Milwaukee (EFM) program, which provides home visitation and other services to families who live in eight ZIP codes in Milwaukee. This initiative would expand this to additional areas that are identified as high risk, and would cost an estimated \$250,000 to \$450,000 annually.

c. Expand home visitation services to other communities in southeastern Wisconsin. This would involve the expansion of Racine County's existing home visitation program, or the creation of a new home visitation program in Kenosha or Beloit Counties. The expansion of the Racine program would cost an estimated \$100,000 annually, and the establishment of new programs would cost an estimated \$250,000 to \$300,000 annually.

d. Create a pilot program for "wraparound" services for families in Milwaukee, Racine, Kenosha, or Beloit that are enrolled in a home visitation program and other women at risk of poor birth outcomes. This program would provide and coordinate services beyond home visits, including health care, mental health services, substance abuse services, and referral to other support services.

e. Coordinate with the Wisconsin partnership program, a program to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in birth outcomes through grants for comprehensive, community-based initiatives.

13. The administration indicates that the funding provided under the bill is not intended to fund any specific activity listed above. Rather, the healthy birth outcomes program would receive these funds and determine which of these recommendations would be implemented, or whether some other strategy would be implemented with the funding provided.

## **Foster Care Public Information Campaign**

14. DCF contracts with the foster care and adoption resource center (FCARC) to provide information and resources for: (a) existing or prospective foster and adoptive families; (b)

public, tribal, and private agency foster care, child welfare, and adoption staff; and (c) youth currently or previously involved with the foster care system. The FCARC currently provides public information activities to promote a better understanding of the foster care program and awareness of the need for foster parents, including: (a) a billboard and radio campaign throughout the state to recruit new foster parents; (b) a website that provides information about the foster care program and the need for new foster parents; and (c) providing information to prospective foster families that contact the FCARC for more information.

15. The bill would provide \$155,600 annually, funded with a portion of the \$2 increase in the fee for a copy of a birth certificate, to conduct public information activities to promote understanding of the foster care program and awareness of the need for foster parents.

16. At the request of DCF, the FCARC prepared recommendations for Wisconsin to improve the public image of foster care both in the general public and among child welfare professionals and foster families. These recommendations are described below.

a. Develop a message for a public service campaign for radio, television, and internet distribution, survey current attitudes and beliefs about foster care, and analyze themes that would change opinions. The estimated cost is \$45,000.

b. Develop a public service campaign for radio, television, and internet distribution that uses a single spokesperson who can become identified with the campaign based on the results under (a). The spokesperson could be a former foster child, a long-time foster family, or Jessica Doyle partnered with a celebrity spokesperson. The media campaign would include both paid and public service announcements. The estimated cost is \$50,000 for production and \$300,000 for the campaign.

c. Consider a new design based on the work under (a) and (b) for the statewide recruitment billboards that could incorporate children's artwork. The estimated cost is \$70,000 in posting fees for the billboards and \$45,000 in posting fees for Milwaukee County.

d. Create a model for follow-up with families who inquire about becoming a foster family that demonstrates a high level of customer service through the decision and licensing process. The estimated cost is \$30,000 for a part-time staff person to make follow-up calls and track inquiries and \$5,000 for data system modifications.

e. Host a large foster care month celebration in May to recognize foster care families for their contribution. The cost would depend on the size and scope of the celebration, and would include reimbursement of families for travel expenses.

f. Sponsor a statewide summit focused on retaining and finding families for children who are in need of out-of-home care. Alternatively, sponsor five or six regional summit events. The estimated cost for a single day summit is \$6,000. The estimated cost for a three-day conference is \$20,000.

g. Create a foster parent liaison program to address foster family challenges within the system, which would assist families with child welfare policies and procedures, working with birth parents, behavior problems with a child, locating and attending support groups, communication problems with a social worker, how to provide respite care or find a respite provider, new changes within the foster care system, or how to work with the local agency and/or DCF. The estimated cost is \$186,000 for a liaison position for Milwaukee County, five liaison positions for each of the five regions outside of Milwaukee County, and a statewide coordinator position to ensure quality service.

17. The administration indicates that the funding provided under the bill is not intended to fund any specific activity listed above. Rather, DCF would provide the funds to the FCARC, and the FCARC, with direction from DCF and the FCARC advisory board, would determine which, if any, of these recommendations would be implemented with the funding provided under the bill, or whether some other strategy would be implemented with the funding provided to promote understanding of the foster care program and awareness of the need for foster parents.

18. The Committee could choose not to provide this revenue from the increased fees for these activities, but rather provide additional funding from the fee increase to the CANP Board (Alternative 2). The CANP Board is budgeted \$3,794,600 (\$1,129,700 GPR, \$617,400 FED, \$2,024,400 PR, and \$23,100 SEG from the children's trust fund) in 2008-09 to support three grant programs and the Board's operations costs. The federal funding is available under Title II of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, which supports networks of community-based, prevention-focused family resource and support programs. The program revenue funding is available from the sale of duplicate birth certificates. The Board's three grant programs are: (a) family resource center grants; (b) community-based family resource and support program grants; and (c) statewide projects.

19. Family resource centers provide comprehensive services to families with children through age three from the following four service areas: (a) outreach and family visiting services; (b) group-based parent education and support services; (c) individual center-based parent education and support services; and (d) community resource referral and follow-up services. The CANP Board provides grants of \$85,000 to 20 of the approximately 60 family resource centers in the state.

Community-based family resource and support programs include community response programs, which provide voluntary services to families who are either screened out of child protective services at intake or have their cases closed after the initial assessment in order to prevent future abuse or neglect of a child. The CANP Board awards grants of \$70,000 to 10 community response programs in 10 counties, \$50,000 to a community response program in Milwaukee County, and \$25,000 for an evaluation of these community response programs.

Finally, six statewide organizations receive promising practices grants, for a total of \$350,000. These grants target identified triggers of child abuse and neglect and attempt to improve programs across the state through capacity-building efforts, professional development opportunities, and direct service provision.

With additional funds, the CANP Board could increase the amount of grants or the number of grants provided to family resource centers, community response programs, or statewide promising practices organizations.

20. If the Committee approves this additional fee increase, a minor modification to the bill would be required. The bill would require \$8 of any \$20 fee charged for a copy of a birth certificate issued by the state registrar or a local registrar be forwarded to DOA for deposit in the vital records appropriation; the bill would have to be modified to require \$8 be transferred any copy of a birth certificate for which \$22 is charged. This modifies the creation of s. 69.22(1q)(c) of the statutes.

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to increase the fee charged for copies of birth certificates, and the transfer to the designated programs in DHS and DCF. In addition, make the statutory change described in Discussion Point 20.

2. Modify the bill by: (a) deleting the additional funding that would be provided to DHS for maternal and child health activities (-\$150,400 PR annually); (b) deleting the additional funding that would be provided to DCF for a foster care public information campaign (-\$155,600 PR annually); and (c) increasing funding to the CANP Board by \$306,000 PR annually.

<b>ALT 2</b>	<b>Change to Bill</b>	
	Funding	
PR (DHS)	-	\$300,800
PR (DCF)	-	311,200
PR (CANP)		<u>612,000</u>
PR (Total)		\$0

3. Delete provision.

<b>ALT 3</b>	<b>Change to Bill</b>	
	Revenue	Funding
PR	- \$612,000	
PR (DHS)		- \$912,800
PR (DCF)		<u>- 311,200</u>
PR (Total)		- \$1,224,000

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