

Department of Planning and Budget
2026 General Assembly Session
State Fiscal Impact Statement

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ORIGINAL

Bill Number: HB1222 ER

Patron: Delaney

Bill Title: Social services, local departments of; child abuse and neglect; recorded interviews.

Bill Summary: Requires local departments of social services, unless otherwise demonstrated by good cause shown, to audio or audiovisually record any child welfare interview, defined in the bill. Under the bill, any person may record any communications between themselves and child-protective services personnel that take place during the course of an investigation or family assessment. Under current law, only a person who is suspected of abuse or neglect of a child and who is the subject of an investigation or family assessment may record such communications.

Budget Amendment Necessary: No

Items Impacted: n/a

Fiscal Summary: Minimal/absorbable fiscal impact.

Fiscal Analysis: This bill requires local departments of social services (LDSS) to audio or audiovisually record any child welfare interview conducted as part of a child welfare investigation or a family assessment. LDSS are further required to securely store any such recordings.

Currently, LDSS staff conducting child welfare investigations use a mobile application on a tablet to make audio recordings during investigations. The Department of Social Services (DSS) then pays the mobile application vendor for storage of the audio recordings. Following the passage of the bill in the House and Senate, it has been clarified that the agency is not currently directed by law to record all interviews conducted during family assessments; rather, under current law, LDSS staff are permitted to audio record interviews conducted during family assessments on an as-needed basis when the person being interviewed elects to make an audio recording. In FY 2025, LDSS completed 36,761 family assessments and investigations. While this bill is not expected to lead to an increase in the amount of interviews conducted, it is expected to lead to an increase in the amount of interview recordings made and the amount of storage needed to store and retain such recordings.

Currently, the average size of the recording contents in the mobile application is 10 megabytes. To ensure sufficient storage space for all family assessment and investigation recordings made in a given year, DSS estimates that they will need to increase available storage through the mobile application to one terabyte (TB) per year. DSS reports that the cost for one TB of storage through the mobile application is approximately \$150 per month, which would translate to \$1,800 per year.

Additionally, documentation for family assessments and investigations must be retained; DSS reports that data is typically retained for anywhere between three and 18 years. Accordingly, DSS would need storage capacity for up to three terabytes of audio recording data. Given that the number of recordings stored would grow over time upon passage of the legislation, the cost for FY 2027 (one TB) is estimated at \$1,800; the cost

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for FY 2028 (two TB) is estimated at \$3,600; and the cost for FY 2029 and future years (three TB) is estimated at \$5,400. DSS expects that such costs can be absorbed within existing appropriation.

The bill requires DSS to approve all equipment used to record interviews pursuant to the legislation. Currently, LDSS have discretion in choosing the devices they use to audio record interviews conducted during investigations. It is assumed that the agency would approve multiple device types to account for current LDSS practices and limit any potential equipment costs.

Other: n/a