

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 2282

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

DATED: AUGUST 2, 2023

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:** Establishes guardianship monitoring program in Office of Public Guardian for Elderly Adults.
- Type of Impact:** Annual State expenditure increase.
- Agencies Affected:** Department of Human Services.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	<u>Annual</u>
State Cost Increase	\$85,000 to \$725,000

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates that this bill will increase annual State expenditures for the Office of the Public Guardian for Elderly Adults by between \$85,000 and \$725,000 to establish a guardianship monitoring program within the office. This estimate assumes that the office will need to hire between one and six new full-time equivalent employees, at an annual base salary range of \$53,000 to \$75,000 plus fringe benefits, to implement the provisions of the bill.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill establishes a guardianship monitoring program within the Office of the Public Guardian for Elderly Adults to monitor court-appointed legal guardians of elderly adults to detect abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Under the bill, the office is designated as an “interested party” that must be served with the periodic reports that court-appointed guardians of elderly adults are mandated to file with the court. The bill requires the office to review these reports and accompanying documentation and to intervene in cases in which problems or inconsistencies are identified.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received, but the following FY 2024 data regarding inquiries, cases, and funded positions in the Office of the Public Guardian for Elderly Adults was provided in the FY 2024 Governor's Budget. The table also reflects the amounts included in the FY 2024 Appropriations Act for the office:

Office of the Public Guardian for Elderly Adults – FY 2024 Appropriations and Projected FY 2024 Data

Number of Inquiries	Number of Cases Handled	Number of Court-Appointed Cases	Number of Funded Positions	FY 2024 State Appropriation	FY 2024 Federal Appropriation
30,240	9,185	484	77	\$1.8 million	\$3.2 million

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

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Currently, the provisions of the bill are fulfilled via the Guardianship Monitoring Program within the Judiciary. Qualified volunteers in the Guardianship Monitoring Program track and report guardian actions using the Guardianship Monitoring System, which is a Statewide database used by all counties to track guardian activities. Volunteers review guardian reports, financial records, doctor certifications, and other documents in order to identify, and report to the court, discrepancies that could signal abuse.

Using available data, the OLS estimates that approximately 85 volunteers support this program, with each volunteer working six to 12 hours per month. Based upon this data, and assuming that between 25 percent and 75 percent of these hours are dedicated to monitoring court-appointed guardians of elderly adults, the provisions of this bill would result in the office needing to increase staff levels to perform approximately 128 to 765 hours of work each month. Assuming a 35-work week, the office would need to hire one to six new staff members to meet the requirements of this bill.

Section: Human Services

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).