

Department of Planning and Budget

2002 Fiscal Impact Statement

1. Bill Number HB747

House of Origin ☐ Introduced ☒ Substitute ☐ Engrossed
Second House ☐ In Committee ☐ Substitute ☐ Enrolled

2. Patron Plum, A.

3. Committee Health, Welfare and Institutions

4. Title Expansion of the Home Energy Assistance Program

5. Summary/Purpose: House Bill (HB) 747 as amended expands the responsibilities of the Department of Social Services (Department) in its administration of the Home Energy Assistance Program. Under the amendment, the Department's responsibilities will be broadened to include the following:

- Leading and facilitating meetings with the Department of Housing and Community Development; the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy; and other Commonwealth agencies, as well as any nonstate programs that elect to participate in the Home Energy Assistance Program, for the purpose of sharing information directed at alleviating the seasonal energy needs of low-income Virginians, including needs for weatherization assistance services;
- Collecting and analyzing data on the amount of energy assistance provided through the Department, categorized by fuel type in order to identify the unmet need for energy assistance in the Commonwealth;
- Developing and maintaining a state-wide list of available private and governmental resources for low-income Virginians in need of energy assistance.

6. No Fiscal Impact

7. Budget amendment necessary: No

8. Fiscal implications:

Background

DSS operates the current energy assistance program with four FTE central office staff, 22 central office part-time staff, no regional staff, and part-time staff in 122 local departments of social services. The total is roughly equivalent to approximately 45 FTEs working year-round (the work is concentrated during the heating season and the total number of individuals working during that period is considerably larger).

In FY2001, the Department provided \$2.1 million to localities for local energy administration. Actual Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefits to low-income families needing energy assistance totals about \$35 million. Local agencies generally use temporary (seasonal) workers to accept, review, and determine eligibility for the existing energy assistance program. These local agencies indicate that current funding is

inadequate to conduct such labor-intensive program and that they are subsidizing energy assistance activities from their eligibility budgets for other programs.

Staff in the DSS energy assistance unit will absorb these new responsibilities within existing resources.

Program Activities

The responsibilities mandated in §63.1 -339.A.2 through 4 will be initiated during FY2003 and would be a continuing part of the program. Responsibilities would involve central office staff, but would not initially affect local departments of social services or require regional staff. These positions would have responsibility for the following non-benefit aspects of the legislative mandate:

- Interagency and public/private coordination (§63.1 -339.A.2)
- Design and supervise the needs assessment of energy services statewide, including unmet need (§63.1 -339.A.3)
- Develop and maintain a statewide list of available private and governmental resources for low income Virginians in need of energy assistance (§63.1 -339.A.4)

9. Specific agency or political subdivisions affected:
Virginia Department of Social Services
Local departments of social services
Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development;
Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy

10. Technical amendment necessary: None

11. Other comments: None

Date: 02/11/02/jlr

Document: G:\FIS2002\DSS\HB747h1.Doc Jeff Ryan

cc: Secretary of Health and Human Resources

