

BILL SUMMARY
1st Session of the 59th Legislature

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| Bill No.: | SB907 |
| Version: | ENGR |
| Request Number: | |
| Author: | Rep. Lawson |
| Date: | 4/19/2023 |
| Impact: | See analysis below |

Research Analysis

SB907 creates the Family Representation and Advocacy Act which creates the Family Representation and Advocacy Program within the Administrative Office of the Courts in order to ensure uniform and high-quality legal representation for children and parents or guardians in deprived child actions. From funds appropriated or otherwise available for implementing the Act, the Administrative Office of the Court will issue a request for proposals and contract with an eligible organization to administer the Program through the establishment of a state central office. The central office will work statewide with judicial districts and attorneys by contracting with, training, compensating, and supporting legal counsel for children, indigent parents, legal guardians, and Indian custodians appointed by the court.

The Program must ensure that all counsel have the training, support, and access to provide uniform and high-quality legal representation. The measure provides for the hiring of a qualified Executive Director for the program who will then hire all staff. The Executive Director must submit budget requests and will report quarterly to the Administrative Office of the Courts or any board established therein. The Program will have authority to contract with a legal entity and social workers as needed. The existing Offices of Public Offender will continue to provide representation for children in deprived children proceedings and may elect to contract with the Program. The Program must ensure that all areas of the state are equitably served and will prioritized judicial districts where attorneys are unavailable for court appointments or are minimally compensated and the Program must ensure that counsel and interdisciplinary contractors are adequately compensated. The Program is authorized to annually review the performance of the attorneys, interdisciplinary contractors, and entities with which the eligible organization contracts, with the goal of helping them achieve and maintain high-quality performance. The Oklahoma Supreme Court may direct the Administrative Office of the Courts to establish an advisory board to exercise oversight over the Family Representation and Advocacy Program and to make recommendations and take actions as necessary to ensure proper program administration.

The measure also outlines the creation of a revolving fund for the Program and requires an annual report to be transmitted to the Governor, Speaker of the House, and President Pro Tempore of the Senate no later than December 31 each year.

Prepared By: Suzie Nahach

Fiscal Analysis

SB907 creates the Family Representation and Advocacy Act, providing for the creation of new positions along with the implementation of certain training and support programs to carry out the requirements of the measure. Officials with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) have

provided a cost estimate of \$18,000,000 annually for a centralized entity to be operating at full capacity carrying out the program as laid out in the measure. If a phased rollout is implemented, the estimated cost of year one is \$685,212. The estimated cost of year two is \$712,447. Using a phased rollout, the \$18,000,000 annual cost estimate remains the same once the program is full phased and rolled-out statewide.

Prepared By: Robert Flipping IV, House Fiscal Staff

Other Considerations

None.