

EXPANDS CHILD PROTECTION LAW TO INCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY



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FISCAL ANALYSIS

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HOUSE BILL 5984 SUBSTITUTE H-1

Sponsor: Rep. Paul N. DeWeese

House Committee: Family and Children Services

FLOOR ANALYSIS - 5/9/02

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SUMMARY

HB 5984 amends the Child Protection Law by adjusting the definition of child abuse by removing the reference to teacher or teacher's aide. In addition, the legislation adds members of the clergy and Christian science practitioners to the list of those required to report suspected child abuse or neglect. However, the legislation does recognize religious leader and member confidentiality if communication is understood by both to be confidential.

It appears HB 5984 would have an indeterminate impact on state and local costs. The inclusion of members of the clergy in the reporting requirement could result in an increased number of investigations conducted by state Child Protective Services (CPS) workers and local law enforcement agencies, potentially increasing state and local costs. In addition, the legislation could result in additional court and correctional costs. However, due to the fact that the potential for increase in reports, investigations, and convictions is unknown at this time, the potential increase is indeterminate.