



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

HB4819

by Rep. Curtis J. Tarver, II

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act
30 ILCS 105/5.1038 new

Creates the Commission on Strengthening Fathers and Families Act. Provides that the purpose of the Act is to promote the recognition of the importance of the participation of both parents in the lives of their children. Creates the Strengthening Fathers and Families Initiative (Initiative) with the goal of increasing the awareness of the problems created when a child grows up without the presence and support of a caring and loving father, identifying strategies that are successful in overcoming identified obstacles that discourage the active engagement of fathers, and other specified goals. Requires the Initiative to also promote positive interactions between fathers and their children, while promoting positive interactions between fathers and the mothers of their children. Creates the Commission on Strengthening Fathers and Families to carry out the purposes, goals, and initiatives of the Act. Contains provisions on the Commission's membership, goals, and duties, including, but not limited to, (i) developing a comprehensive plan that promotes the positive involvement and engagement of fathers and that advances family strengthening strategies, (ii) evaluating State programs, governmental policies, and community initiatives related to fatherhood and family strengthening, (iii) making recommendations to the Governor, the Deputy Governor of Health and Human Services, and the General Assembly, (iv) developing criteria for grants to fatherhood and family strengthening projects, and (v) receiving grants, contributions, and other funds for projects and activities related to advancing father involvement and engagement, and family strengthening. Provides that the Department of Human Services shall provide staffing support to the Commission. Creates the Fatherhood and Family Strengthening Fund to hold grants, contributions, and other funds received by the Commission to be expended for the purposes of the Act. Amends the State Finance Act to add the Fatherhood and Family Strengthening Fund to the list of State funds.

LRB104 20144 KTG 33595 b

1 AN ACT concerning families.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the
5 Commission on Strengthening Fathers and Families Act.

6 Section 5. Purpose. The purpose of this Act is to promote
7 the recognition of the importance of the participation of both
8 parents in the lives of their children. While social policy
9 and practice have often focused on the difficulties of raising
10 a child in a single-parent family and have often created
11 barriers to the involvement of both parents in their child's
12 life, the purpose of this Act is to promote a social policy and
13 practice that values the contribution that each parent brings
14 to the family unit, whether that parenting is occurring with
15 parents who have never been married, parents who are divorced,
16 or parents who are married and cohabiting.

17 Section 10. Strengthening Fathers and Families Initiative.

18 (a) The purpose of this Act shall be implemented through a
19 family strengthening initiative to be directed by the
20 Commission on Strengthening Fathers and Families created under
21 Section 15.

22 (b) The Strengthening Fathers and Families Initiative is

1 created with the following goals:

2 (1) to increase the awareness of the problems created
3 when a child grows up without the presence and support of a
4 caring and loving father;

5 (2) to identify obstacles that impede or prevent the
6 involvement of caring and loving fathers in the lives of
7 their children;

8 (3) to identify strategies that are successful in
9 overcoming identified obstacles that discourage the active
10 engagement of fathers; and

11 (4) to facilitate the transition from current
12 policies, perceptions, and practices that adversely affect
13 the participation of fathers in their children's lives due
14 to such policies, perceptions, and practices failing to
15 promote the contributions of caring and loving fathers.

16 The Strengthening Fathers and Families Initiative shall
17 promote positive interactions between fathers and their
18 children, as well as promote positive interactions between
19 fathers and the mothers of their children. While the emphasis
20 of the initiative must be on the population of children whose
21 families have received or are receiving public assistance, the
22 initiative may not exclude those populations of children for
23 whom the initiative is appropriate.

24 Section 15. Commission on Strengthening Fathers and
25 Families; membership and goals.

1 (a) The Commission on Strengthening Fathers and Families
2 is created to carry out the purposes, goals, and initiatives
3 of this Act. The Commission shall consist of a maximum of 21
4 members. The Chair of the Commission shall be appointed by and
5 serve at the pleasure of the Deputy Governor of Health and
6 Human Services. Upon appointing the inaugural Chair of the
7 Commission, the inaugural Chair and the Deputy Governor of
8 Health and Human Services shall work collaboratively to
9 identify and install the Commission members.

10 The Commission shall be operational when at least an
11 additional 10 Commission members have been identified and
12 installed. Election of the co-chair of the Commission and the
13 establishment of Commission bylaws must occur within a
14 reasonable time and manner after the Commission is effectively
15 operational.

16 All decisions made and policies established by the
17 Commission shall be by consensus of the Commission membership
18 based on the vote of a simple majority.

19 (b) The Commission membership may be comprised of, but not
20 limited to: fathers, mothers, a TANF program representative,
21 an advocate from the child welfare community, advocates from
22 fatherhood organizations, advocates from mother advocacy
23 organizations, a family law representative, a judicial or
24 family court representative, a representative from a legal
25 service organization, a social service agency representative,
26 a family support organization representative, a representative

1 from the Department of Corrections, a representative from the
2 Attorney General's Office, a representative from the State's
3 Attorney's Office, and either a representative from the
4 Department of Healthcare and Family Services' Division of
5 Child Support Services or a representative from the Department
6 of Children and Family Services.

7 At least 50% of the Commission's membership shall be
8 comprised of parents.

9 Members shall serve without compensation but may be
10 reimbursed for their actual expenses in carrying out their
11 duties as members of the Commission.

12 The Department of Human Services must provide staff
13 support to ensure the operational integrity and to assist in
14 advancing the work of the Commission.

15 (c) The goals of the Commission on Strengthening Fathers
16 and Families must include, but are not limited to, the
17 following:

18 (1) Advocating for growing public will to support the
19 role of fathers in families across the socio-economic
20 spectrum of families and family-configurations.

21 (2) Supporting education opportunities that prepare
22 fathers to effectively meet their legal, financial,
23 nurturing, and emotional obligations to their children.

24 (3) The promotion of the establishment of paternity
25 upon the birth of a child.

26 (4) Promoting strategies that assist fathers in

1 fostering nurturing and emotional connections with their
2 children, while building cooperative and collaborative
3 relationships with the mothers of their children.

4 (5) Supporting the promotion of peer-to-peer father
5 support groups that support fathers in developing and
6 maintaining positive and supportive relationships with
7 their children, as well as with the mothers of their
8 children.

9 (6) Reducing the negative outcomes of divorce,
10 separation, custody, and visitation by advancing
11 opportunities for parent and family mediation and
12 promoting approaches that support autonomous parental
13 decision-making through mutually agreed on parenting
14 plans.

15 (7) Encouraging the coordination, integration, and
16 leveraging of State and local services so they function
17 more seamlessly and holistically to strengthen and support
18 fathers and families.

19 Section 20. Duties of the Commission on Strengthening
20 Fathers and Families. The duties of the Commission on
21 Strengthening Fathers and Families may evolve over time as the
22 Commission executes on its mission. The Commission's duties
23 include, but are not limited to, the following:

24 (1) To develop a comprehensive plan that promotes the
25 positive involvement and engagement of fathers, and that

1 advances family strengthening strategies that improve the
2 social, emotional, and physical development of children.

3 (2) To evaluate State programs, governmental policies,
4 and community initiatives related to fatherhood and family
5 strengthening and make recommendations regarding those
6 programs and policy initiatives to the Governor, the
7 Deputy Governor of Health and Human Services, and the
8 General Assembly.

9 (3) To engage in a partnership with a university
10 collaborator that will advance basic research and data
11 analysis associated with promoting practices and policies
12 that support father engagement and involvement and family
13 strengthening. The inaugural research partner for the
14 Commission shall be the Lab for Empowerment and
15 Advancement through Dad-Driven Research in the School of
16 Social Work at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

17 (4) With the support of the Office of the Deputy
18 Governor for Health and Human Services, to convene
19 statewide symposia to discuss and accelerate efforts to
20 advance fatherhood and family strengthening initiatives
21 statewide.

22 (5) Subject to appropriations, to develop criteria for
23 and to issue requests for proposals for grants to
24 fatherhood and family strengthening projects that are
25 approved by the Commission.

26 (6) To receive grants, contributions, and other funds

1 for the purpose of projects and activities related to
2 advancing father involvement and engagement and family
3 strengthening.

4 (7) As appropriate, and as resources and capacity
5 allow, to annually develop a report associated with the
6 work of the Commission on Strengthening Fathers and
7 Families.

8 Section 25. Fatherhood and Family Strengthening Fund.
9 Grants, contributions, and other funds received by the
10 Commission on Strengthening Fathers and Families must be
11 deposited into the Fatherhood and Family Strengthening Fund, a
12 special fund created in the State treasury. Subject to
13 appropriation and as directed by the Commission, moneys in the
14 Fund may be expended for the purposes of this Act. The
15 Department of Human Services may direct discretionary funds to
16 the Fatherhood and Family Strengthening Fund to support the
17 core functions and operations of the Commission on
18 Strengthening Fathers and Families.

19 Section 85. The State Finance Act is amended by adding
20 Section 5.1038 as follows:

21 (30 ILCS 105/5.1038 new)

22 Sec. 5.1038. The Fatherhood and Family Strengthening Fund.