

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8924

To reauthorize the Court Improvement Program for 5 years, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 20, 2022

Mrs. MURPHY of Florida (for herself and Mrs. MILLER of West Virginia) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means

A BILL

To reauthorize the Court Improvement Program for 5 years, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Strengthening Courts
5 for Kids and Families Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. CLARIFICATION OF SUPPORT FOR LEGAL SERVICES**

7 **THAT SUPPORT THE STABILITY AND PERMA-**
8 **NENCY OF FAMILY REUNIFICATION.**

9 Section 431(a) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.
10 629a(a)) is amended—

1 (1) in paragraph (1)—

2 (A) by striking “and” at the end of sub-
3 paragraph (E);

4 (B) by striking the period at the end of
5 subparagraph (F) and inserting “; and”; and

6 (C) by adding at the end the following:

7 “(G) civil legal services designed to sta-
8 bilize and support families and to enable chil-
9 dren to safely remain with, or be reunited with,
10 their families.”; and

11 (2) by adding at the end the following:

12 “(10) CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES.—The term ‘civil
13 legal services’ includes—

14 “(A) legal representation and related legal
15 services that address barriers to family preser-
16 vation or reunification or otherwise work to im-
17 prove the strength and stability of families,
18 such as legal services addressing issues related
19 to domestic violence, housing, identity theft,
20 wage theft or other employment concerns, un-
21 fair debt collection, disability rights, and child
22 support; and

23 “(B) legal representation in proceedings
24 mandated under part E but only to the extent

1 that the legal representation is not supported
2 under part E.”.

3 **SEC. 3. INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR COURT IMPROVEMENT**
4 **PROGRAM.**

5 Section 436 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.
6 629f) is amended—

7 (1) in subsection (a), by striking
8 “\$345,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2017 through
9 2022” and inserting “\$375,000,000 for each of fis-
10 cal years 2023 through 2027”; and

11 (2) in subsection (b)(2), by striking
12 “\$30,000,000” and inserting “\$60,000,000”.

13 **SEC. 4. ASSESSMENT OF, AND IMPROVEMENT IN, HAN-**
14 **DLING OF PROCEEDINGS RELATING TO FOS-**
15 **TER CARE AND ADOPTION.**

16 Section 438 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.
17 629h) is amended—

18 (1) in subsection (a)(1), by adding at the end
19 the following:

20 “(F) that determine the appropriateness,
21 and best practices for use, of technology to
22 allow conduct of remote hearings, including to
23 ensure maximum participation of individuals in-
24 volved in proceedings and to enable courts to

1 maintain operations in times of public health or
2 other emergencies;”;

3 (2) in subsection (a)(2)(C), by striking “by
4 training judges, attorneys, and other legal per-
5 sonnel” and inserting “through support for civil
6 legal services and high-quality legal representation
7 for children and their parents, and agencies”;

8 (3) in subsection (a)(2)—

9 (A) by striking “and” at the end of sub-
10 paragraph (B);

11 (B) by striking the period at the end of
12 subparagraph (C) and inserting “; and”; and

13 (C) by adding at the end the following:

14 “(D) to provide for training of judges, at-
15 torneys, and other legal personnel to improve
16 parent, family, and youth engagement in child
17 welfare proceedings, to support optimal use of
18 remote hearing technology, to support imple-
19 mentation of the Family First Prevention Serv-
20 ices Act to reduce unnecessary use of con-
21 gregate care for children in foster care and to
22 reduce unnecessary entry of children into foster
23 care, and for other purposes that improve the
24 conduct of child welfare proceedings.”;

25 (4) in subsection (b)—

1 (A) by striking “(C)” and inserting “(3)”;

2 and

3 (B) by adding at the end the following:

4 “(4) a description of how the court will work
5 with State and local child welfare agencies to im-
6 prove the availability of civil legal services, and sup-
7 port for high quality legal representation for chil-
8 dren and parents, including whenever possible with
9 support provided under part E.”; and

10 (5) in subsection (c)(3), by striking
11 “\$1,000,000” and inserting “\$2,000,000”.

12 **SEC. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

13 The amendments made by this Act shall take effect
14 on October 1, 2022.

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