

Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services

HB 7061 — Sheriffs Providing Child Protective Investigative Services

by Health and Human Services Committee and Rep. Koster (SB 7056 by Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services)

The bill related to Sheriffs Providing Child Protective Investigative Services, requires the transfer of child protective investigation services from the seven sheriff's offices that provide those services back to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Currently, the DCF contracts with Pinellas, Manatee, Broward, Pasco, Hillsborough, Seminole, and Walton counties to conduct child protective investigations for their respective counties. Ultimately, this transfer will make the DCF the sole entity performing child protective investigations in the State.

The bill specifies the timeframe and framework for the transfer, including sheriff employees' ability to transition to the DCF, the transfer of records, assets and finances, use of facilities, and a final grant accounting. The bill makes conforming changes to the statutes to remove references to sheriff's offices conducting child protective investigations.

The bill provides that all staff in good standing employed by each respective sheriff for the provision of child protective services, employed before the effective date of this legislation, will have the option to transfer their employment to the DCF.

The bill requires that any claim or cause of action brought against a sheriff in relation to child protective investigations before the applicable transfer date must be defended and indemnified in accordance with the provisions of the grant or agreement applicable at the time of the alleged incident. Any claim or cause of action brought after the applicable transfer date must be defended and indemnified by the DCF.

The bill has a significant fiscal impact to state government that is addressed in SB 2500, the General Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2023-2024.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect January 1, 2024, except where otherwise expressly provided.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 116-0