



Committee for Public Counsel Services

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REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE FOR PUBLIC COUNSEL SERVICES

TO:

THE MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE AND SENATE

COMMITTEES ON WAYS & MEANS

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

CLERK OF THE SENATE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Pursuant to Chapter 211D, Section 17

Submitted November 2025

The Committee for Public Counsel Services (“CPCS”) respectfully submits this report in compliance with the reporting requirement set forth in section 17 of Chapter 211D, which was included as an outside section in the FY 2023 General Appropriations Act, Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023.

I. Reporting Requirements

Section 17 of Chapter 211D specifically provides:

- (a) There shall be established and set up on the books of the commonwealth separate fund known as the Children and Family Legal Representation Trust Fund, which shall be administered by the chief counsel of the committee for public counsel services. The fund shall be credited with: (i) revenue from appropriations or other money authorized by the general court and specifically designated to be credited to the fund; (ii) reimbursement funds from federal sources for the legal representation of children and families by the committee for public counsel services, including, but not limited to, reimbursements pursuant to Title IV-E of the federal Social Security Act; and (iii) interest earned on such revenues and reimbursements in the fund. Amounts credited to the fund that are unexpended at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert to the General Fund.
- (b) Money in the fund may be expended by the chief counsel, without further appropriation, for the purposes of: (i) providing pre-petition representation and diversion advocacy; (ii) increasing the availability and quality of representation statewide, especially in underrepresented communities; (iii) ensuring availability of education advocacy throughout the commonwealth; (iv) improving the quality of advocacy through increased training capacity and performance evaluations; (v) increasing multidisciplinary representation and the use of experts, parent partner programs and specialized advocacy and support units; and (vi) improving and modernizing agency data collection, data reporting and billing systems. The chief counsel may designate an administrator of the fund to implement approved activities consistent with this section.
- (c) Annually, not later than November 1, the chief counsel shall file a report on the fund’s activities with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on the judiciary. The report shall include but not be limited to: (i) the source and amount of funds received; (ii) the amounts distributed and the purpose of expenditures from the fund, including any grants provided to early education and care programs, philanthropic organizations or other stakeholder organizations; and (iii) anticipated revenue and expenditure projections for the next calendar year.

II. CPCS Report

CPCS’s response to reporting requirements is as follows:

i) the source and amount of funds received

CPCS has been coordinating with the Office of Federal Finance and Revenue in EOHHS to secure reimbursements pursuant to Title IV- E of the federal Social Security Act.

CPCS did not receive any additional funds from any other source.

ii) the amounts distributed and the purpose of expenditures from the fund, including any grants provided to early education and care programs, philanthropic organizations or other stakeholder organizations

The Fund supports 39 FTEs in CPCS' ED Law unit, CAFL Conflict offices in Springfield and Worcester, as well as in our CAFL Training unit. In FY 2025, CPCS awarded a 15-month contract to Community Legal Aid (CLA) to provide civil legal aid and support to families impacted by the Department of Children and Families. This total contract is valued at \$2.8M, of which \$635K is included in our total \$7.57M spending since inception of the trust.

iii) the anticipated revenue and expenditure projections for the next calendar year

CPCS anticipates receiving \$14M in the next calendar year and projects an expenditure of not less than \$8M to support current obligations as of October 2025.

III. Additional Information

CPCS would also like to take this opportunity to report on noteworthy programs funded through the Children and Family Legal Representation Trust Fund made possible using Title IV-E funds:

a. Pre-Petition Representation Project

The Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS) currently funds the statewide Pre-Petition Representation Project, an initiative designed to support families at risk of child removal. As part of this effort, CPCS partners with the Massachusetts Family Preservation Project (FPP), a consortium of five legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth: MetroWest Legal Services (MWLS), Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), Northeast Legal Aid (NLA), Community Legal Aid (CLA), and South Coastal Counties Legal Services (SCCLS).

These organizations provide assistance through multidisciplinary teams – each consisting of an attorney, a social worker, and a parent partner – whose shared goal is to stabilize families and prevent separation. The teams support parents during DCF investigations and help address underlying concerns such as housing instability, safety planning, mental health, and education. Through pre-petition representation, families receive holistic assistance that combines legal advocacy with guidance in accessing community-based resources. This multidisciplinary model ensures that families are empowered to self-advocate while addressing the root causes of DCF involvement.

Between April and July 2025, the first quarter of full implementation, FPP's four operating teams completed 51 new intakes. Including ongoing matters that began prior to the funding period, the program supported 76 families statewide during this quarter. In addition to open cases, the teams provided advice and consultation over the phone, ensuring that families who may not meet eligibility criteria (or who are not yet ready for full representation) still receive timely guidance and support. These efforts highlight the program's commitment to accessible, early intervention for all families in need.

Moreover, since the launch of CPCS funding, partner organizations have worked hard to establish and expand their teams. There are now seven multidisciplinary teams across Massachusetts, five of which are fully staffed and operational. In the other two teams, only two positions remain open: SCCLS is hiring for a case manager, and MWLS is recruiting for a parent partner.

To strengthen collaboration and shared learning, the teams participate in monthly all-team training sessions that bring together attorneys, case managers, and parent partners. In addition, quarterly cohort meetings are held for each role separately, creating opportunities to share discipline-specific insights and best practices. The teams have also conducted presentations across the state to build relationships and encourage referrals, for example at multiple DCF offices, Holyoke Hub, Baystate Health Social Work Department, the Brockton School Department and Family Matters First. These outreach efforts have been instrumental in raising awareness of the program and fostering strong, collaborative partnerships with DCF staff.

Beginning later this year, the Family Preservation Project will partner with Tufts Interdisciplinary Evaluation Research (TIER) to conduct a multi-year evaluation of the program. The evaluation will examine which families most benefit from pre-petition support, how multidisciplinary teams assist families, and which interventions have the greatest impact. **It will also assess how many children are safely remaining with their families and the extent to which the program reduces costs for the Commonwealth through prevention.** This partnership with TIER will provide a data-driven foundation to assess outcomes, identify opportunities for improvement, and demonstrate the long-term value of early, family-centered legal and social interventions.

b. Transition Age Youth Office

CPCS's Children and Family Law Division is establishing a Transition Age Youth (TAY) Office to enhance representation for young people navigating the family regulation system. Based in Framingham, the office will provide both direct legal representation and specialized training and consultation to support private panel attorneys statewide – ensuring that youth-centered advocacy reaches young people across the Commonwealth. The multidisciplinary TAY team will include an Attorney in Charge, four Trial Attorneys (including an LGBTQ+ specialist), a Social Worker, a Peer Support Specialist, and an Administrative Assistant.

The TAY Office will work closely with clients as they prepare to transition out of the foster care system, helping them plan for stable and independent futures. Its work will center on strengthening lifelong connections, advancing equity and access, and promoting educational success. This includes preserving kinship and sibling ties, addressing racial and ethnic disparities, ensuring language and disability accommodations, and advocating for specialized populations such as LGBTQ+ and dually involved youth (those navigating both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems). Through this targeted, multidisciplinary approach, the TAY Office seeks to transform how Massachusetts supports young people at one of the most pivotal and complex stages of their lives.

CPCS greatly appreciates the Legislature's continued support for our mission to assist and represent the Commonwealth's most vulnerable, including its children and families.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Anthony Benedetti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anthony" and last name "Benedetti" clearly distinguishable.

Anthony Benedetti
Chief Counsel