

# EXPANDS CHILD PROTECTION LAW TO INCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY



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FISCAL ANALYSIS

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## HOUSE BILL 5984 AS INTRODUCED

**Sponsor:** Rep. Paul N. DeWeese

**House Committee:** Family and Children Services

## COMMITTEE ANALYSIS - 5/6/02

**Analyst(s):** Erin Black

Marilyn Peterson

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## SUMMARY

HB 5984 amends the Child Protection Law by adjusting the definition of child abuse to include members of the clergy who harm or threaten harm to children's health or welfare, if through nonaccidental physical or mental injury. In addition, the legislation adds members of the clergy to the list of those required to report suspected child abuse or neglect. However, the legislation does recognize the minister, priest, or Christian science practitioner privilege.

It appears HB 5984 would have an indeterminate impact on state and local costs. The inclusion of members of the clergy in the child abuse definition and 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.