0411-1005 For the operation of the office of the child advocate; provided that no less than $200,000 shall be expended for the review and analysis of the office management, recordkeeping, and background check procedures of the department of children and families pursuant to section 219................................................................. $700,000

SECTION 219. Pursuant to section 5 of chapter 18C of the General Laws, the office of the child advocate, in consultation with the inspector general, shall conduct an emergency review and analysis of the office management, recordkeeping and background check policies of the department of children and families. The office shall develop best business practices and management recommendations to ensure the improved administration of the department, including, but not limited to, the development of: (1) comprehensive paper and electronic recordkeeping of the intake and status of children under the care of the department, including an annual update of the photographs of such children and documentation of all required medical examinations; (2) comprehensive paper and electronic recordkeeping of all required background checks of pre-adoptive and foster parents and their household members age 15 or older; (3) collection and maintenance practices to better access information related to approved criminal history waivers of foster parents, including a centralized, up-to-date compilation of all such waivers approved by the department and subsequent monthly reviews; (4) performance measurement tools to access the effectiveness of programs and services delivered; (5) improved communication between the commission’s office, supervisors, staff members and children receiving services; (6) a concise procedure manual to be distributed and implemented with every department office; and (7) other administrative or business practices to ensure the effective management of the department. The office of the child advocate shall request any information necessary to complete the review from the department of children and families, the executive office of health and human services, or any other office, department or agency as needed, and such departments shall grant all requests unless prohibited by law.

The office of the child advocate, subject to appropriation, may retain an independent third party expert or a consultant to assist in the emergency review. The office shall file a preliminary report with the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities on or before July 31, 2014.

On or before December 31, 2014, the office of the child advocate shall prepare and distribute a survey to clients and employees of the department of children and families, including social workers and supervisors. The office shall work with the department to ensure that the survey is distributed appropriately and standards for client privacy are upheld. The survey may be returned anonymously to the office. The survey should be designed to assess the problems that clients face with the department. The survey should also be designed to assess the problems that department employees experience during the course of their employment with the department. The office shall study, review and report on the outcome of the surveys and assess the needs and resources of the department of children and families and submit the results of its investigation and study, and its recommendations, if any, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry its recommendations into effect, by filing the same with the clerks of the house and senate on or before April 1, 2015.