



DEPARTMENT OF AUDITS AND ACCOUNTS

270 Washington St., S.W., Suite 1-156
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-8400

Greg S. Griffin
STATE AUDITOR
(404) 656-2174

January 23, 2017

Honorable Andrew Welch
State Representative
508-C Coverdell Legislative Office Bldg.
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

SUBJECT: Fiscal Note
House Bill (LC 29 7216)

Dear Representative Welch:

This bill would require the Georgia Crime Information Center, which is a division of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), to retain fingerprints obtained for determining employment, placement, registration, a permit, or a license for an agency or entity participating in the federal program that allows continuous review of the individual's criminal history. These fingerprints are required to be secured and maintained separately from records relating to the identification of criminals. The Center is also required to submit these fingerprints to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for future searches.

Projected Costs for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation

The bill would result in additional costs for information system programming changes and additional staffing. As shown in Exhibit 1, for programming changes necessary to receive and route information to meet FBI requirements and to increase IT storage space, GBI would incur one-time IT vendor costs of approximately \$245,000 and ongoing annual costs of approximately \$3,200. GBI would also incur costs to train and audit participating agencies as required under the Federal Bureau of Investigation's CJIS Security Policy requirements. Costs for two trainers and an analyst are estimated at \$272,037 in the first year. Approximately \$47,500 is for one-time costs (primarily two vehicles), and \$224,574 is for recurring salaries/benefits and personnel-related operating costs.

Exhibit 1. Projected Costs for Retaining Fingerprints, FY 2018

	One-Time Costs	Annual Costs	TOTAL
IT Vendor Costs	\$245,000	\$3,186	\$248,186
Personnel & Related Costs	<u>\$47,463</u>	<u>\$224,574</u>	<u>\$272,037</u>
TOTAL	\$292,463	\$227,760	\$520,223

Potential Cost Savings

The bill could eventually result in some cost savings for the few state agencies that require follow-up national fingerprint checks performed by the FBI. As a result of the bill, agencies could subscribe to the Rap Back system that would notify them when the criminal history of an employee changes, eliminating the need for follow-up background checks and the associated fees. However, because current employees' fingerprints have not been retained, each employee would have to be fingerprinted (and fees paid) at least once after implementation of a Rap Back system. There would be no cost savings for follow-up checks that are limited to state criminal history because GBI does not charge agencies for these checks.

While GBI data indicates that several agencies paid for national fingerprint checks during FY 2016, GBI does not track whether the transactions were for initial or follow-up background checks. We identified three agencies—the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) [child care workers only]—that require and pay for follow-up national fingerprint checks. The FBI fee for these checks is \$12, but DECAL and TCSG pay an additional \$8.50 per check to the vendor that scans and transmits the fingerprints.¹

- DHS – DHS only requires fingerprint checks for existing employees when they are promoted or transferred. Officials stated that the agency averages approximately 1,700 fingerprint checks per year, but they are unsure of the number that are re-checks (vs. new employees). If one-half of the checks are for existing employees, the savings would be \$10,200. However, as noted above, employees would have to be scanned once under a Rap Back system before the program would lead to cost avoidance.
- DECAL – DECAL requires that existing employees have a fingerprint check every five years. Given that the agency has fewer than 400 employees and that not all employees remain for five years, potential savings would likely be relatively low. If the bill eliminated the need for 50 follow-up checks in a single year, agency savings would be \$1,025.
- TCSG – TCSG requires follow-up background checks for 88 child care workers only (consistent with DECAL requirements). Because child care positions generally have high turnover, it is likely that a relatively small portion of these workers would receive a follow-up check. If the bill eliminated the need for 20 follow-up checks in a single year, agency savings would be \$410.

This bill could provide greater cost savings for school systems. Newly hired teachers are subject to an initial fingerprint-based criminal background check, but follow-up checks are non-fingerprint (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-211.1). According to the Georgia Association of School Personnel Administrators, school systems pay local law enforcement officials for follow-up checks. Our review of a small sample of local law enforcement agencies found published fees ranging from \$5 to \$20, though rates could be different for school systems. If the school systems subscribe to the Rap Back program, the follow-up checks and fees would be unnecessary. We could not determine the number of school district employees subject to the follow-up background checks in a given year. However, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission stated that approximately 25,500 renewal certificates are issued each year. But this number does not include other school district

¹ DHS has its own Live Scan devices for fingerprinting.

employees that are not required to maintain a certificate but may be subject to periodic background checks.

Sincerely,



Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor



Teresa A. MacCartney, Director
Office of Planning and Budget

GSG/TAM/jb