

Department of Fiscal Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 569 (Delegate Heller)
Ways and Means

Animal Dissection - Student's Right of Refusal

This bill allows a student at a public or private noncollegiate institution to refuse to take part in animal dissection as part of an instructional course. Affected institutions must notify incoming students and their parents or guardians of this right of refusal and authorize parents or guardians to assert their child's right of refusal. The bill requires such institutions to offer an appropriate alternative education project to students who refrain from participating in or observing such an exercise. Discrimination and/or retaliation against such students is prohibited.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Indeterminate effect on local expenditures as discussed below. Revenues are not affected. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: Meaningful impact on small businesses as discussed below.

Fiscal Analysis

Local Expenditures: The extent to which local government expenditures would be affected depends directly upon the number of students for which alternative projects must be made available and the cost for such programs. However, because a model of or computer program simulating an animal dissection can be re-used indefinitely, the one-time costs for the model or program would be insignificant on an annualized basis and could actually reduce annual expenditures.

Howard County, which does have a limited dissection alternative program for students,

estimates that a one-time expenditure of approximately \$1,000 per school would be required to implement an appropriate technology program for accommodating students. If such a program was replicated statewide, it would cost up to \$198,000 (198 secondary schools multiplied by \$1,000).

In addition, the costs associated with establishing an advance notification of students and their parents/guardians of projects involving animals are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing resources.

Small Business Effect: Approximately 166,500 students attended 1,113 non-public schools in Maryland in 1995, representing 17% of all students. Many of these schools are small businesses and would be significantly affected by the requirement to purchase an alternative program in place of animal dissection. The actual impact on private schools would depend upon the number of schools that include animal dissection within their curriculum and the type of alternative program selected. Private schools may cover the additional costs resulting from this bill by raising tuition rates or perhaps relying on parent organizations to raise funds.

The primary providers of animal dissection supplies for public schools are large outfits and would not be affected by this bill.

Information Source(s): Department of Fiscal Services, Howard County

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