

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 832 (Delegates Owings and O'Donnell)
Ways and Means

Education - Schools - Authorized Practices

This bill permits student-delivered voluntary messages or prayers during graduation, commencement ceremonies, or other school-sponsored events. School officials may not discriminate for or against any student on the basis of the political, philosophical, religious, or other content of a message or prayer that the student intends to deliver or does deliver; however, they may ensure that the content of the messages and prayers is consistent with community standards and is appropriate for the event.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must provide local boards of education with model regulations to ensure that local regulations implementing student-delivered prayers and messages are consistent with federal and State law. Local boards of education are entitled to legal representation by the Attorney General and the State must reimburse the local boards for any monetary awards related to complying to the bill's provisions.

This bill takes effect June 1, 2000.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MSDE can develop model regulations on student-delivered prayers and messages with existing resources. The State could incur additional expenditures resulting from legal representation by the Attorney General and reimbursement to counties as a result of lawsuits filed against the local boards of education.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Principals and teachers in each public elementary and secondary school may require all students to be present and participate in daily opening exercises and to meditate silently for approximately one minute. During this period, a student or teacher may read the holy scripture or pray.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

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