

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2009 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 281 (Delegate Ross, *et al.*)  
Health and Government Operations and  
Ways and Means

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**Disability History and Awareness Month - Educational Requirements**

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This bill requires the Governor to proclaim the month of October as Disability History and Awareness Month. In conjunction with Disability History and Awareness Month, local boards of education are encouraged to incorporate instruction on the history of disabilities, people with disabilities, and the disability rights movement into the standard curriculum. The presidents of the constituent institutions of the University System of Maryland (USM) are also encouraged to conduct and promote activities at their institutions that provide education, awareness, and understanding of the same.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Commemorating Disability History and Awareness Month does not materially affect State finances.

**Local Effect:** Commemorating Disability History and Awareness Month can be accomplished with existing resources.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** Six official commemorative days and two months are recognized in State law as shown in **Exhibit 1**. The Governor also must issue a proclamation each year encouraging citizens and other individuals to observe a moment of silence at 3 p.m. on Memorial Day to unite in remembrance and commemorate the heroic acts and efforts of Marylanders who have served and died in the U.S. armed forces.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Official Commemorative Days and Months in Maryland**

Asian Lunar New Year Day <sup>1</sup>	January/February
Black History Month	February
Women’s History Month	March
John Hanson’s Birthday <sup>2</sup>	April 13
Law Day	May 1
Maryland Charter Day	June 20
Poetry Day	October 15
Annapolis Charter Day	December 17

<sup>1</sup>Day designated as new year on the Asian lunar calendar.

<sup>2</sup>John Hanson served as the first president of the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation from 1781 to 1782.

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**Background:** There is no standard, universally accepted definition of disability; therefore, estimating the number of people with a disability is difficult. Disabilities can be physical, mental, sensory, or cognitive. Common disabilities include hearing loss, vision loss, and physical limitations. Chronic conditions like arthritis can also be disabilities. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 15% of the civilian noninstitutionalized population age five and older have some level of disability. The Census Bureau estimates, that 850,000 people living in Maryland have some sort of disability.

Public Law 176, enacted by the U.S. Congress in 1945, designated the first week in October as “National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week.” In 1988, the U.S. Congress changed the name to “National Disability Employment Awareness Month.” President George H. W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 to protect the rights of people with disabilities as American citizens and make discrimination based on a person’s disability illegal. October is the customary month for states to recognize people with disabilities. In Maryland, the Governor’s Office has regularly worked with the Department of Disabilities to declare October “Disability Awareness Month.”

The Department of Disabilities advises that the Office of Disability Employment Policy in the U.S. Department of Labor provides educational materials and information online to increase the public’s awareness of the contributions and skills of American workers with disabilities.

## Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** SB 907 (Senator Muse, *et al.*) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education, Governor's Office, Department of Disabilities, University System of Maryland, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 24, 2009  
mlm/mwc

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