

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
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FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 473

(Senator Lenett, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environmental Matters

Environment - Recycling - Public School Plans

This bill requires a county's recycling plan to address a strategy for collecting, processing, marketing, and disposing of recyclable materials from its public schools. The recycling plan must be revised to reflect the new requirements by October 1, 2010.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill's requirements can be implemented with existing resources by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE).

Local Effect: Local government workloads may increase minimally beginning in FY 2010 to revise the recycling component of the county Solid Waste Management Plan; however, it is anticipated that most jurisdictions can update their plans with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal beneficial impact to small businesses engaged in the collection, transportation, or processing of recyclable materials.

Analysis

Current Law: In 1988, the Maryland Recycling Act required each county to submit a recycling plan. Jurisdictions with more than 150,000 residents were required to reduce their solid waste by 20%, and jurisdictions with less than 150,000 residents were required to reduce their solid waste by 15%. According to MDE, by 2000, every county had met or exceeded their percentage requirements under the Maryland Recycling Act. Further legislation enacted in 2000 established a voluntary statewide diversion goal of 40% by 2005.

Counties have flexibility to determine the best way to reach the required recycling rates. However, the county recycling plan must address specified issues such as the feasibility of composting mixed solid waste, methods for the separate collection and composting of yard waste, and methods of financing county recycling efforts. County recycling plans are currently revised on a triennial basis.

Background: The Container Recycling Institute (CRI) notes that nationwide recycling campaigns in the 1980s caused a surge in recycling rates which reached a peak of 54% in 1995. Recycling rates have steadily declined since 1995 and were at 34% by 2006. MDE reports that, in 2005, Maryland had a recycling rate of 39.2% and a waste diversion rate of 42.6%.

In addition to the issue of landfill diversion, recycling is encouraged due to the potential for significant reductions in virgin material extraction, energy use, and emissions of greenhouse gases. For example, according to CRI, recycling an aluminum soda can uses 75% less energy than the production of a new soda can, and the recycling of a single can saves enough energy to run an average laptop computer for four hours.

Recycling rates have decreased since the summer of 2008 as global commodity values have fallen substantially, thereby reducing the incentive and profitability of substituting recycled scrap materials for virgin materials. For example, the *New York Times* reports that the value of tin fell by more than 98%, from \$397 to about \$5 in 2008. In addition, in a public filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, Waste Management Incorporated noted that recycling market prices decreased year-on-year by about 60% in November 2008.

Local Fiscal Effect: The bill requires counties to revise recycling plans to incorporate a recycling strategy for public schools, but it does not actually require recycling at public schools. As such, only administrative expenditures may increase in order to revise county recycling plans; however, it is anticipated that most jurisdictions can update their plans with existing resources.

Additional Comments: The response from local governments regarding the cost of implementing a recycling strategy in public schools varies by jurisdiction. Baltimore County indicates that the school system already has a recycling program in place; however, Somerset County indicates that the county neither has the resources nor funding to collect recyclables from the school system. In addition, Somerset County does not provide a curbside recycling program to its residents. Instead, five convenience centers are set up throughout the county for collection of recyclables and those materials are sent to the Wicomico County landfill for processing. The two municipalities in the county (Crisfield and Princess Anne) have limited collections and the recycled materials are

brought to the county landfill, separated, and transported to the Wicomico County landfill.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1290 (Delegate Rice, *et al.*) - Environmental Matters.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Department of the Environment, Maryland Environmental Service, North East Maryland Waste Disposal Authority, Maryland Association of Boards of Education, Public School Construction Program, Department of Legislative Services

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