

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2011 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 822

(Senator Middleton)

Finance

Health and Government Operations

Maryland Communities for a Lifetime Act

This bill creates a “Maryland Communities for a Lifetime Program” within the Maryland Department of Aging (MDoA) and authorizes a county or municipal corporation to establish a certification process for “Communities for a Lifetime” (CFLs). In addition, the bill adds a CFL representative to the membership of the Innovations in Aging Services Advisory Council and requires an annual plan developed by the Secretary of Aging to include provisions for funding, to the extent practicable, grants that are sought by CFLs.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill’s requirements can be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: Potential increase in local revenues and expenditures for counties and municipal corporations that participate in the program.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The purpose of the program is to establish a comprehensive State plan to address the aging-in-place preference of current and future seniors; provide available resources to local communities to enhance aging-in-place services and facilitate the independence of older adults; and promote a State aging-in-place program that overcomes barriers in housing, transportation, health care, employment, and social and civic engagement. MDoA must collect and make available best practices on policies to encourage aging-in-place.

A county or municipal corporation may establish a process to certify communities as CFLs. MDoA must recommend criteria that local jurisdictions may use to certify CFLs, including the extent to which a community has sought and plans to expand (1) public health, prevention, and wellness programs that serve older adults; (2) affordable transportation options; (3) affordable housing; (4) employment, civic engagement, recreation, and leisure options for older adults; and (5) other initiatives that boost the ability of older adults to age in place. A CFL must annually submit to MDoA a progress report on the community's current efforts and future plans to enable aging in place.

Current Law: Chapters 511 and 512 of 2007 established the Statewide Empowerment Zone for Seniors Commission to recommend a plan to develop an Empowerment Zones for Seniors program in Maryland. The program would direct financial and regulatory incentives to local communities that develop qualifying comprehensive empowerment zones for senior plans to enhance aging-in-place services and facilitate the personal independence and civic and social engagement of seniors in the communities. The commission terminated on September 30, 2009, but was reestablished as the Maryland Communities for a Lifetime Commission by Chapter 10 of 2010. The commission terminates April 13, 2011.

The Interagency Committee on Aging Services plans coordination of State and local services covering employment, health, housing, social services, and transportation for Maryland's elderly. Meeting quarterly, the committee devises programs to assess the needs of elderly persons and their caregivers and to provide services. Prior to each legislative session, the committee reports to the General Assembly on its plans, activities, and the status of services to Maryland seniors.

The Innovations in Aging Services Advisory Council advises the Secretary of Aging on the Innovations in Aging Services Program, which provides competitive funding grants to design and test innovative ideas and programs for seniors, publicly disseminate the test results, and help meet the need for personnel trained to provide services to seniors in the State. With the advice of the council, the Secretary develops an annual program plan that sets priorities for funding grants for innovative services to seniors and training personnel who provide services to seniors in the State. The plan must include provisions for evaluating any program it funds.

A unit of local government may apply to the Secretary of Aging for a grant for the cost of planning, design, construction, acquisition, conversion, renovation, or improvement of a project; developing a master plan; purchasing capital equipment for a project; leasing a project; or making a subgrant to a nonprofit for one of the previously mentioned purposes. If the Secretary approves a grant application, the Secretary must file a report describing the scope of the project with the Board of Public Works that includes a recommendation that the board make the requested funds available. The State grant

amount for a project must be determined after considering the density of the senior population in the area affected by the project, the proximity of the proposed center to an existing senior activities center, and other localities eligible for State funding that have not received previous funding under the program or a similar program.

Background: A July 2009 report produced by the Statewide Empowerment Zone for Seniors Commission (now referred to as the Maryland Communities for a Lifetime Commission) included a number of specific recommendations for program development. The commission's major recommendations include:

- introducing legislation to reestablish the commission to provide continuity in planning for a "Maryland Communities for a Lifetime (MCFAL)" (replacing the "Senior Empowerment Zone" terminology);
- introducing legislation to create a MCFAL program within MDoA, which should include specified elements;
- providing MCFAL incentives and assistance from MDoA, as well as other State and federal programs;
- requiring MDoA, in consultation with the State Interagency Committee on Aging Services, to oversee MCFAL to achieve specified objectives; and
- conducting a review of existing State programs related to aging in place.

Additional commission recommendations include increasing community-based care, affordable transportation, and wellness and prevention programs as well as expanding civic engagement and employment options for older adults.

State Effect: The bill's requirements can be handled with existing resources. MDoA advises that no funds are currently available to fund grants sought by CFLs, and that MDoA has no current plans to request any such funds from the State. However, to the extent that funds are requested in the future, the bill may result in additional State expenditures.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: SB 813 of 2010, a similar bill, received an unfavorable report from the Senate Finance Committee.

Cross File: HB 1188 (Delegates James and Hubbard) - Health and Government Operations.

Information Source(s): Cities of Baltimore, Bowie, and Takoma Park; Garrett, Montgomery, and Worcester counties; Department of Human Resources; Maryland Department of Planning; Department of General Services; Department of Housing and Community Development; Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Maryland Department of Aging; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

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