

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2013 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Revised**

Senate Bill 114

(Senators Benson and Montgomery)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Health and Government Operations

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**Health - Pregnant Women - Hepatitis B Testing**

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This bill requires an individual attending a woman for pregnancy to submit to a medical laboratory a blood sample taken from the woman (1) when the individual first examines the woman and (2) if the woman did not have prenatal services or there is no documentation of the woman's hepatitis B status, at the time of delivery. The bill specifies that the laboratory receiving the blood sample must perform a standard hepatitis B test that is approved by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). The bill further specifies that its requirements do not apply to a woman who objects to a standard hepatitis B test because the test is against her religious beliefs and practices.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Because DHMH has advised that the testing required under the bill is already a recommended standard of care (and is already covered by Medicaid), the bill is not expected to materially affect State finances or operations.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Background:** "Hepatitis" means inflammation of the liver and also refers to a group of viral infections, including the hepatitis B virus (HBV), that affect the liver. HBV can be either acute (*i.e.*, a short-term illness occurring within six months of exposure) or chronic (*i.e.*, a serious disease that can result in long-term health problems and/or death). In many cases, an acute infection leads to a chronic infection. According to the

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), viral hepatitis is the leading cause of liver cancer and the most common reason for liver transplantation.

HBV can be transmitted by sharing needles, syringes, or other drug injection equipment with an infected person; through sexual contact with an infected person; or from an infected mother to her child at birth. According to CDC, there were an estimated 38,000 new HBV infections in the United States in 2009 (down from 287,000 in 1987). HBV vaccination is recommended as the best way to prevent the virus.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** SB 611 of 2012 passed the Senate and received a hearing in the House Health and Government Operations Committee, but no further action was taken. Its cross file, HB 1084, received a hearing in the House Health and Government Operations Committee, but no further action was taken.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 22, 2013  
ncs/ljm Revised - Senate Third Reader - March 18, 2013

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