

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 577 (Delegate M. Washington, *et al.*)
 Appropriations

Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth - Continuation, Membership, Stipend, and Duties

This bill extends, from June 30, 2014, to June 30, 2015, the termination date for the Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth. The bill also alters membership requirements and adds additional responsibilities for the task force, which continues to be staffed and chaired by the Governor’s Office for Children (GOC). The task force must issue its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly in a preliminary report by November 1, 2014. A final report must be issued by June 1, 2015.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2014. The task force terminates June 30, 2015.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$71,300 in FY 2015 only, which reflects the cost of hiring one full-time contractual employee within GOC to staff the task force and produce the required report, and to provide a stipend to designated members of the task force. Reimbursements for other task force members can be handled with existing resources.

(in dollars)	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	71,300	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$71,300)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill adds additional responsibilities for the task force by requiring it to:

- convene an Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Advisory Board composed of youth or young adults who have experienced homelessness, including youth participants in the Baltimore Homeless Initiative and the Prince George's County Homeless Youth Work Group;
- solicit and consider input from the advisory board, including inviting at least one representative of the advisory board to each task force meeting; and
- solicit and consider input from community organizations that provide services to unaccompanied homeless youth, including continuing or developing workgroups.

The bill specifies that the task force's responsibility to make recommendations on legislation and policy initiatives to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in the State must include recommendations relating to access to employment, transportation, and the needs of subpopulations of unaccompanied homeless youth. The task force must also oversee the implementation of the recommendations issued by the task force on November 1, 2013, and any additional recommendations made by the task force by (1) supporting through its members legislation designed to implement the recommendations; (2) proposing and supporting through its members regulations and guidance designed to implement the recommendations; (3) allocating through its members budgetary and other resources to implement the recommendations; and (4) evaluating the progress of its members and public and private partners in implementing the recommendations.

The bill authorizes a youth or young adult member of the task force to receive a small stipend to be determined by and paid out of the budget from GOC. Other task force members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations, as provided in the State budget.

Background: Chapters 544 and 545 of 2013 established the Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Studies for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, which is chaired by GOC. The task force was required to:

- compile existing information on and identify the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth, and identify the public- and private-sector programs and resources currently available to meet those needs;

- identify gaps in public- and private-sector programs and resources currently available to meet the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth;
- collect and compile data on the unaccompanied homeless youth population in the State, including the causes of homelessness in this population and the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in each jurisdiction of the State;
- make recommendations on legislation and policy initiatives to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in the State;
- make recommendations on funding requirements and budgetary priorities to address the needs of unaccompanied youth in the State; and
- make recommendations on any other relevant issues or considerations identified by the task force.

The task force was required to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly, and issued its report on November 1, 2013. The report noted that it remains unclear how many unaccompanied homeless youth reside in Maryland, particularly because they are a group that has traditionally been undercounted and underserved. It noted, however, that existing data indicates that the problem is growing. For example, Maryland State Department of Education data revealed a 75% increase in the number of unaccompanied homeless students statewide between the 2009-2010 and 2011-2012 school years. The Johns Hopkins Center for Adolescent Health identified 640 unaccompanied homeless youth in Baltimore City in 2011, which represented a 50% increase from 2009. The report further indicated that the primary causal factors associated with this population of youth are family dysfunction and abuse (including rejection due to sexual orientation, gender expression, pregnancy, or disability), exiting the foster care or juvenile justice systems without the skills and resources needed to live independently, and the inability or unwillingness of families to care for older children because of economic hardship. These youth face significant threats to daily survival and long-term welfare, including a disproportionately high risk of school dropout, physical and mental health problems, suicide, crime victimization, involvement in criminal activity, unsafe sexual activity, unplanned parenthood, and unemployment.

The report also concluded that existing support services were insufficient to meet the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in the State, and identified several focus areas in order to assess the gaps in the resources that are currently available. The focus areas included in the report were (1) identification and connection; (2) housing; (3) education; (4) higher education; (5) economic stability; (6) health; and (7) leadership. The report set forth numerous recommendations in each of these areas.

The task force terminates June 30, 2014.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by \$71,305 in fiscal 2015 only which reflects a 30-day start-up delay and the bill’s June 1, 2014 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one full-time contractual employee within GOC to staff the task force, produce the required report, and convene the required advisory board. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses. The estimate assumes termination of the contractual employee on June 30, 2015, when the task force terminates. This estimate also accounts for a \$1,200 stipend to be paid to youth or young adult members of the task force. Although GOC was originally able to chair and staff the task force with existing resources, the Department of Legislative Services agrees with GOC’s assessment that the continued and new responsibilities associated with this task force, such as convening an advisory board and overseeing and evaluating the progress of implementing recommendations by numerous State agencies, cannot be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Contractual Position	1
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$65,155
Operating Expenses	<u>6,150</u>
Total FY 2015 State Expenditures	\$71,305

As noted above, this bill also requires the task force to oversee implementation of the recommendations within the report issued in 2013, as well as any additional recommendations, by specified methods, including requiring task force members to allocate budgetary or other resources to implement the recommendations. While some of the recommendations may be possible to implement using existing resources of the impacted agencies, others may have a significant fiscal impact that continues beyond the termination date of the task force and may require regulatory action, statutory changes, or budgetary action in order to be implemented. For example, increasing the appropriation to a specified housing program (one recommendation within the report) requires action by the Governor (to include increased funding in the proposed budget) as well as the General Assembly (to appropriate the funding). Task force members themselves have no authority to allocate funding. Another recommendation was for the Motor Vehicle Administration to reduce fees charged for new and replacement identification cards for unaccompanied homeless youth. This needs to be done through regulation, and any potential fiscal impact of reducing those fees would be accounted for in the fiscal analysis of the regulation prepared by the Department of Legislative Services for the Joint Committee on Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review. Accordingly, this fiscal and policy note does not account for any expenditures associated with the actual implementation of any recommendations; instead, it quantifies only the direct expenditures related to the oversight required by the task force in fiscal 2015.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City; Governor's Office for Children; Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention; Maryland Department of Planning; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Higher Education Commission; Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Department of Juvenile Services; Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

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