

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 177 (Delegate Hough, *et al.*)
 Rules and Executive Nominations

General Assembly - Live and Archived Video Streaming of Meetings

This bill requires the House of Delegates and the State Senate to make available to the public live and archived video streaming of all of their meetings, including standing committee hearings and voting sessions.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures by the General Assembly increase by *at least* \$1.5 million in FY 2015 only; this estimate only reflects the cost of upgrading transmission equipment in the State Senate hearing rooms. Additional substantial costs (likely in the millions of dollars) are incurred to upgrade equipment in the House and Senate chambers; however, a reliable estimate of those additional costs is not available. No effect on revenues.

(in dollars)	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	1,500,000	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$1,500,000)	\$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

Current Law/Background: Under Maryland’s Open Meetings Act, with limited exceptions, a “public body” must (1) provide adequate notice of the time and location of

meetings and (2) meet in open session in a location that is reasonably accessible to attendees. A public body is any entity that (1) consists of at least two individuals and (2) is created by the Maryland Constitution; a State statute; a county or municipal charter; a memorandum of understanding or a master agreement to which a majority of the county boards of education and the Maryland State Department of Education are signatories; an ordinance; a rule, resolution, or bylaw; or an executive order of the Governor or of the chief executive authority of a political subdivision. Exclusions from the definition of “public body” include juries, the Governor’s cabinet and Executive Council, and single-member entities.

All floor and standing committee meetings in both the State Senate and the House of Delegates are subject to the Open Meetings Act. Thus, they are open to the public and must be published in the General Assembly’s meeting schedule. Live and archived audio streaming is available for all meetings of the House of Delegates and the State Senate; neither chamber is equipped with video-streaming equipment.

There are four standing committees in the State Senate and six standing committees in the House of Delegates. All hearing rooms in the House are equipped with video-streaming equipment, but the Senate hearing rooms only have audio-streaming equipment. Currently, live and archived audio streaming is available for all Senate committee hearings, and live and archived video streaming is available for all House committee hearings. In the Senate, streaming of voting sessions is at the discretion of each committee chair; the House does not stream voting sessions.

State Expenditures: The Office of Information Services (OIS) within the Department of Legislative Services advises that the cost to upgrade equipment in the Senate hearing rooms to allow for video streaming is estimated to total approximately \$1.5 to \$2.0 million, based on its examination of recent bids to purchase and install the equipment. Reliable estimates of the cost to upgrade equipment in the House and Senate chambers are not available. OIS advises that the Senate chamber can be upgraded with standard equipment, but that the House chamber poses challenges because of its size and tight seating arrangements.

Once the proper equipment is installed, there is no marginal cost involved in streaming committee voting sessions in addition to committee hearings.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Legislative Services

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