

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 829

(Delegate Alston, *et al.*)

Health and Government Operations

Finance

Public Health - Service Sector Employees - Mental Health Awareness and Skills Building Training

This bill requires the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), subject to the limitations of its budget, to (1) provide a virtual “mental health awareness and skills building” training program for service sector employees in the State and (2) in coordination with the Maryland Department of Labor (MDL) and the Public Service Commission (PSC), conduct a public awareness campaign to increase awareness among service sector employees of the availability of the program.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$756,100 in FY 2025 for administrative costs, web-based platform development, and contractual services. Future years reflect annualization, inflation, and elimination of one-time costs. Higher education revenues and expenditures increase by \$400,000 in FY 2025 only from payment for contractual services, as discussed below. MDL and PSC can coordinate with MDH with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Higher Ed Rev.	\$400,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	\$756,100	\$205,700	\$214,000	\$222,500	\$231,400
Higher Ed Exp.	\$400,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net Effect	(\$756,100)	(\$205,700)	(\$214,000)	(\$222,500)	(\$231,400)

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

Local Effect: The bill does not directly affect local governmental operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: “Mental health awareness and skills building” means recognizing and responding to indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress (including depression, trauma, violence, suicide, and substance abuse) and identifying professional and self-help resources to help individuals in crisis. “Service sector employee” means an individual whose primary job function frequently results in interaction with members of the public (including a cashier, retail store employee, taxi driver, and transportation network operator).

The mental health awareness and skills building training program must address the goals of (1) increasing mental health literacy; (2) increasing confidence in providing support to an individual in distress; (3) increasing knowledge of professional and self-help resources; and (4) decreasing stigma associated with mental health concerns.

The program must include a level of detail sufficient to accomplish the program’s specified goals but be modular and succinct enough to be practical for service sector employees to complete. Within the context of a service sector employee’s employment, the program must also include (1) how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders and (2) a basic understanding of the behavioral health and crisis services available to assist the service sector employee or an individual in distress that the employee may encounter.

The public awareness campaign may include advertisements and communications to license and certificate holders.

Current Law: Chapters 136 and 137 of 2021 required MDH to include mental health first aid among the behavioral health services for which MDH provides service coordination for eligible veterans. Mental health first aid must consist of training for veterans and their immediate family members on how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders.

State Fiscal Effect: While the bill specifies that MDH must implement the bill’s provisions within the limitations of its budget, MDH advises that significant resources are necessary to implement a mental health awareness and skills building program as specified, including (1) two full-time positions (program manager and website master); (2) a one-time expense of \$400,000 to contract with universities, likely the State’s historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), to provide high-quality and validated training materials and online modules; (3) a one-time expense of \$200,000 to establish a web-based training platform; and (4) \$20,000 in annual maintenance costs for the web-based platform.

Thus, MDH general fund expenditures increase by \$756,128 in fiscal 2025, which accounts for the bill’s October 1, 2024 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one program manager (to oversee project development and coordinate with contracted vendors for implementation) and one website master (to oversee the initial set-up and ongoing monitoring of the web-based platform). It includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Positions	2.0
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$141,616
Contractual Services	400,000
Web-based Platform Development	200,000
Other Operating Expenses	<u>14,512</u>
Minimum FY 2025 MDH Expenditures	\$756,128

Future year expenditures reflect full salaries with annual increases and employee turnover as well as (1) annual increases in ongoing operating expenses; (2) termination of the one-time costs to contract with HBCUs and establish the web-based platform; and (3) the ongoing maintenance costs associated with the web-based platform.

This analysis does not reflect any costs associated with a public awareness campaign. Although costs for public awareness campaign materials were initially estimated at \$200,000 annually, MDH now advises that it can incorporate the bill’s required public awareness campaign into other campaigns it currently implements with minimal impact. MDL and PSC can coordinate with MDH to conduct a public awareness campaign with existing budgeted resources.

As MDH plans to contract with HBCUs for high-quality and validated training materials and online modules, State higher education revenues and expenditures increase by \$400,000 in fiscal 2025 only.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Health; Maryland Department of Labor; Public Service Commission; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 27, 2024
km/jc Third Reader - March 21, 2024
Revised - Amendment(s) - March 21, 2024

Analysis by: Amber R. Gundlach

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510