

Department of Fiscal Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

Revised

House Bill 841 (Delegate Finifter, *et al.*)

Commerce and Government Matters

Referred to Judicial Proceedings

Workplace Religious Freedom Act of 1997

This amended bill requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for the religious practices, observances, or beliefs of employees or applicants for employment. An employer must make an effort to make the accommodation without causing undue hardship to the business. Factors used to determine if the accommodations would result in undue hardship include (1) the identifiable cost of the accommodation in relation to the size and operating cost of the employer; (2) the number of individuals who will need the accommodation; (3) the action conflicts with a collective bargaining agreement; and (4) the action places a significant burden on other employees.

The Maryland Commission on Human Relations must monitor the implementation of this Act for the period October 1, 1997 through September 30, 1999. The commission must then submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 1999.

The bill is to be construed only prospectively.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures could increase to the extent that additional cases of unlawful employment practices are filed with the Human Relations Commission. While the number of additional cases cannot be reliably projected, any expenditure increase is assumed to be minimal.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal impact on small businesses. The bill could increase the expenditures of small businesses in order to accommodate the religious practices of their employees. However, the bill does not require the accommodations if doing so would create an undue hardship on the business.

Information Source(s): Human Relations Commission, Department of Fiscal Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 24, 1997
nrd Revised - House Third Reader - April 1, 1997

Analysis by: Jody J. Minnich

Reviewed by: John Rixey

Direct Inquiries to:

John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst

(410) 841-3710

(301) 858-3710