

Department of Fiscal Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

House Bill 1082 (Delegate Morgan, *et al.*)

Commerce and Government Matters Referred to Economic & Environmental Affairs

Blind or Visually Impaired Individuals - Information Technology - Access

This amended bill requires the Chief of Information Technology in the Department of Budget and Management, in consultation with the Information Technology Board, to develop performance standards for nonvisual access to information technology. The chief and the board are required to develop a technology access clause for procurement contracts to implement the performance standards, establish procurement specifications based on the performance standards, and provide advice and technical assistance to the State and “State-assisted organizations” in regard to the performance standards and the procurement of information technology goods and services. The performance standards established must meet minimum blind access specifications. Any technology procured must: (1) provide equivalent access to blind or visually impaired individuals; (2) allow for effective, interactive control and use of technology achievable by nonvisual means; (3) be compatible with public networks; and (4) be integrated into public networks. The bill does not require nonvisual access to information technology by individuals who are not blind or visually impaired.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Indeterminate. General fund expenditures could increase significantly as a result of the requirements of the bill. Revenues would not be affected.

Local Effect: Indeterminate. Expenditures could increase significantly as a result of the requirements of the bill. Revenues would not be affected.

Small Business Effect: None. Small businesses would not be directly affected.

Fiscal Analysis

State Expenditures: The Department of Budget and Management (DBM), which oversees expenditures for information technology systems for State agencies, advises that the bill's compatibility and integration requirements would necessitate that most of the State's computers and programs be updated or modified even if they are not directly used by a visually impaired individual at a potentially significant, but indeterminate cost. Many of the systems currently used by the State do not permit the required visually impaired use. DBM also advises that the bill's requirements would significantly increase procurement expenditures because the specifications apply to all entities that provide goods and services to the State. This could limit those who bid for contracts, thereby reducing competition, or require providers to incur compliance costs, either of which would increase procurement costs for the State.

For purposes of illustration, DBM advises that providing blind or visually impaired individuals with access to and use of information technology that is equal to that technology provided to fully sighted individuals would cost approximately \$1.72 million in fiscal 1998. DBM's estimate includes 20 full-time programmers, fringe benefits, contractual costs, equipment, and ongoing maintenance and enhancements adjusted for the October 1, 1997 effective date.

The Department of Fiscal Services (DFS) advises that while it is difficult to precisely quantify the bill's effect on State expenditures, the increase could be significant based on the effect of the minimum standards on procurement expenditures. Thus, State expenditures cannot be reliably estimated at this time.

The cost to modify a workstation to provide access for blind or visually impaired individuals varies greatly depending on the type of access required and the application being accessed. For informational purposes, the following are cost estimates for some of the equipment that may be required to be purchased through the procurement standards specified in the bill, as assessed by the Motor Vehicle Administration:

- A video adapter, depending on the degree of magnification and the type of application: \$79 to \$2,000 per workstation
- A "talking screen" or screen review capability make information on the screen available through either synthesized speech or braille: \$595 to \$2,200 for the software only
- Voice input utilities provide the capability to talk to the computer instead of typing: \$250 to \$1,000

Local Expenditures: Localities could experience an indeterminate increase in expenditures as a result of the bill's minimum standards for procurement and access of information technology for the visually impaired, as discussed in the State Expenditures section.

Information Source(s): Department of Budget and Management, University of Maryland, Department of General Services, Department of Fiscal Services

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