

Department of Fiscal Services
 Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 584 (Delegate Poole)
 Commerce and Government Matters

Public Information - Fees for Copies

This bill restricts the fees that may be assessed by a unit of State or local government for reproducing a public record to no more than 25 cents per page unless the custodian of the record needs to spend more than two hours to search for a public record, prepare it for inspection and reproduce it. The bill specifically reduces the reproduction fees charged for certain documents prepared by the Home Improvement Commission, the Department of Assessments and Taxation, the Register of Wills, and the Secretary of State. The bill subjects all laws that set fees for a copy, printout, or photograph of a public record to the limit of 25 cents for reproductions.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund revenues would decrease approximately \$184,000 in FY 1998 which reflects the October 1, 1997 effective date. Out-year revenues reflect 1% growth. General fund expenditures could increase as discussed below.

(in dollars)	FY 1998	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002
GF Revenues	(\$184,000)	(\$246,000)	(\$249,000)	(\$251,000)	(\$254,000)
GF Expenditures	0	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$184,000)	(\$246,000)	(\$249,000)	(\$251,000)	(\$254,000)

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

Local Effect: Indeterminate decrease in revenue. Expenditures would not be affected.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful impact on small businesses that regularly pay for the reproduction of a significant amount of public documents that are currently priced at a rate higher than 25 cents per copy.

Fiscal Analysis

State Revenues: Generally, it was determined that the revenue decrease created by the bill's 25-cent limit on copies would be minimal and could be absorbed with existing budgeted resources. The Department of Assessments and Taxation (DAT), however, advises that they reproduce approximately 328,000 pages per year at \$1 each. Thus, the bill would decrease revenue by \$184,00 in fiscal 1998 which reflects the bill's October 1, 1997 effective date. DAT also projects a \$246,000 decrease in revenues in fiscal 1999 which reflects a full year and 1% growth.

State Expenditures: DAT also advises that expenditures would increase \$51,000 in fiscal 1998 due to increased demand generated by the lower priced photocopies. This estimate includes hiring two Data Device Operators, and purchasing a new photocopy machine. Fiscal 1999 expenditures of approximately \$42,000 include ongoing salaries, 3.5% increases, 3% turnover, supplies, and the elimination of the one-time cost of the photocopy machine.

The Department of Fiscal Services believes it to be unlikely that the reduction in fees from \$1 to 25 cents per page would increase demand enough to warrant two additional staff and a new photocopy machine. If, however, demand does increase significantly in the first year, additional staff and equipment may be required.

Local Revenues: To the extent that localities charge more than 25 cents per page to reproduce public documents, local revenue may be reduced.

Information Source(s): Department of Assessments and Taxation, Home Improvement Commission, Register of Wills, Secretary of State

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 14, 1997

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