

Department of Fiscal Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 439 (Delegate Guns)
Environmental Matters

Medical Examiner - Autopsy - Accident Victims

This bill specifies that an autopsy of an accident victim must be performed in the county where the accident occurred, unless the chief medical examiner decides there is a compelling reason to have the autopsy performed at another location outside the county.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures could increase by an estimated \$1.3 million in FY 1998, which reflects an October 1, 1997 effective date. Future year expenditures reflect annualization and inflation. Revenues would not be affected.

| (in thousands) | FY 1998 | FY 1999 | FY 2000 | FY 2001 | FY 2002 |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| GF Revenues | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| GF Expenditures | \$1,310 | \$1,780 | \$1,810 | \$1,850 | \$1,890 |
| Net Effect | (\$1,310) | (\$1,780) | (\$1,810) | (\$1,850) | (\$1,890) |

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal effect on small businesses as discussed below.

Fiscal Analysis

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures could increase by an estimated \$1,311,500 in fiscal 1998, which reflects an October 1, 1997 effective date. The estimate includes \$1.3 million for providing autopsy examinations in each county instead of at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) in Baltimore City; and \$11,000 for hiring an additional employee.

The estimate for autopsy examinations assumes: (1) the number of county accident victims requiring an autopsy would remain at the 1996 level of 578; (2) the cost of a private pathologist to perform an autopsy would be approximately \$1,500; and (3) hospitals would charge approximately \$1,500 to use their facilities for an autopsy. The estimate for the additional employee reflects the cost of hiring one half-time contractual Office Clerk to organize the autopsies that would be performed in the various counties and to handle additional billings. It includes a salary of \$5,900, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Contractual Services | \$1,300,500 |
| Salaries and Fringe Benefits | 6,500 |
| Operating Expenses | <u>4,500</u> |
| Total FY 1998 State Expenditures | \$1,311,500 |

Future year expenditures reflect: (1) full salaries with 2% annual increases; and (2) 2% annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

In 1996, OCME performed 3,182 autopsies at the Baltimore City location. Assuming the number of autopsies performed in any year remains relatively constant and autopsies for the 578 county accident victims are contracted out to private pathologists, the autopsy caseload for the Baltimore City office would fall to 2,604. Currently, OCME employs nine doctors to perform autopsies at the Baltimore office. It is anticipated that if caseloads fall below 2,250 at the Baltimore office, the OCME could reduce their autopsy staff by one. The resulting reduction in expenditures would offset some of the increased costs due to this bill.

Small Business Effect: To the extent that some pathologists may be self-employed or an employee of a small business health care provider practice, revenues may increase for them. The impact on each self-employed pathologist or small business, however, is expected to be minimal.

Information Source(s): Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Office of the Chief Medical Examiner), Baltimore City, Department of Fiscal Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 18, 1997

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Analysis by: Lina Walker
Reviewed by: John Rixey

Direct Inquiries to:
John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst
(410) 841-3710
(301) 858-3710