

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

House Bill 1160 (Delegate Hixson)

Environmental Matters

Universal Hearing Loss Screenings - Newborns

This bill requires the Advisory Council for the Program for Hearing-Impaired Infants to study the feasibility of requiring universal hearing screening of newborns in the State and advise the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) of the results of the study by December 1, 1998. The study must consider the method and mechanism to fund the screenings and the logistics of conducting the screenings. The bill also increases the membership on the Advisory Council from 10 to 14.

In addition, the bill requires DHMH to study the availability of any federal, State, and local funds or grants to assist hospitals and health care providers in conducting an early identification program and follow-up care for infants who have a risk factor of developing a hearing impairment. If funding is available, DHMH must take the necessary steps to apply for the funds or to educate eligible individuals of the availability of funds. DHMH must report the results of the study and any efforts to receive funding for the screening to the Maryland Association of Maryland Hospitals and Health Systems, the House Environmental Matters Committee, the Senate Finance Committee, and the General Assembly by December 1, 1998.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures could increase by \$9,000 in FY 1999 only. The bill's effect on State finances in the out-years depends on the recommendations of the Advisory Council and the funding efforts of DHMH.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Fiscal Analysis

Background: Under the current program, all newborns in hospitals are assessed in order to identify those infants who appear to be at high risk for hearing impairment. The parents of these high-risk infants are given a handout on the benefits and need for a hearing screening. Six months later, DHMH contacts the physician or family of the infant identified as high-risk to find out if the child has had a hearing screening, and to request the results of a screening if it had been conducted. If a hearing screening had not been performed, DHMH provides the family with a list of providers who could provide a hearing test. Providers on that list are required to report the results of the screening to DHMH. Currently, 5,000 newborns are followed by DHMH as high risk. Of the 5,000 infants, 3% (150) are discovered to have a hearing impairment and require long-term follow-up.

Presently, there are three hospitals in the State that provide hearing screenings to all newborns in that hospital. These hospitals are Holy Cross, University of Maryland, and most recently, Calvert Memorial. Two other hospitals, Sinai and Greater Baltimore Medical Center, previously performed hearing screenings on all newborns; however, the programs were eliminated because they were found to be unprofitable.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures could increase by \$9,000 in fiscal 1999 for three months of contractual services to assist the Advisory Council with the study. Any effect on State finances in the out-years would depend on the recommendations of the Advisory Council and the results of DHMH's efforts to obtain federal, State, and local funds or grants.

Information Source(s): Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Community and Public Administration, Medical Care Policy Administration), Insurance Administration, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History:

First Reader - March 12, 1998

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Analysis by: Lina Walker

Direct Inquiries to:

Reviewed by: John Rixey

John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst

(410) 841-3710

(301) 858-3710