

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 557 (Delegate D. Murphv)

Environmental Matters

Personal Flotation Devices - Children

This bill provides that an operator of a recreational vessel is responsible for the protection of a child under the age of seven aboard the vessel by requiring the child to wear a “personal flotation device”. Recreational vessels do not include charter boats, head boats, or other vessels under the command of an individual licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard. Operators of recreational vessels are liable for not requiring children to wear flotation devices, and are subject to a fine not exceeding \$25 for each violation. The bill does not apply to a recreational vessel that is moored or anchored, or to a child who is below deck or in an enclosed cabin.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any increase in expenditures for the cost of printing new boating education materials could be handled with existing resources. Potential indeterminate increase in general fund revenues due to the bill’s penalty provision.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal. Businesses that sell personal flotation devices could see an indeterminate increase in revenue as a result of increased sales.

Fiscal Analysis

State Effect: Current regulations require that personal flotation devices be on recreational vessels and readily accessible to individuals on the vessels. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will not incur additional enforcement costs, since DNR already monitors whether or not vessels have flotation devices on board. However, DNR advises that it will need to print new boating education materials informing the boating public of the new

requirements at a cost of \$1,000 in fiscal 1999. These costs could be handled with existing resources.

General fund revenues could increase under the bill's monetary penalty provision for those cases heard in District Court, depending on the number of convictions and fines imposed.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 17, 1998
Inc

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