

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 348 (Delegate Goldwater. *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Universal Health Care Coverage Plan

This proposed constitutional amendment requires the General Assembly to enact a universal health care coverage plan for all citizens in Maryland by July 1, 2002. Local approval of the constitutional amendment would not be required.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: If the constitutional amendment is adopted, State expenditures could increase by an indeterminate amount, depending on the universal health care coverage plan adopted by the General Assembly and the funding arrangement for the plan.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: If the constitutional amendment is adopted, there could be a potential meaningful impact on small businesses.

Fiscal Analysis

State Effect: A Current Population Report from the United States Bureau of the Census indicates that there were over 770,000 Marylanders without health insurance coverage in 1995. Assuring health care to every person in Maryland would involve substantial costs. The effect on State expenditures, however, would depend on the universal health care plan developed by the General Assembly and the proposed funding arrangement for the plan. The Maryland Constitution requires that proposed amendments to the Constitution be publicized in at least two newspapers in each county, if available, and in at least three newspapers in Baltimore City once a week for four weeks immediately preceding a general election. The costs associated with these requirements are borne by the State. The fiscal 1999 budget of the State Board of Elections contains funding for publishing constitutional

amendments for the 1998 general election.

Local Expenditures: If approved by the General Assembly, this constitutional amendment will be submitted to the voters at the 1998 general election. It should not require additional costs for the county election boards to administer the election.

Small Business Effect: If more individuals have access to health care, small business health care providers would experience increased business activity.

Information Source(s): Insurance Administration, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Health Care Access and Cost Commission, Community and Public Health Administration), Department of Legislative Services, United States Bureau of the Census

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