

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

House Bill 999 (Delegate Leopold. *et al.*)
Ways and Means

Task Force on Public Charter Schools

This bill establishes a 12-member Task Force on Public Charter Schools. The task force must: (1) review House Bill 999, as originally introduced in the 1998 session, and other states' statutes relating to public charter schools; and (2) recommend legislation for consideration during the 1999 session. The task force's findings and recommendations are due to the Governor and General Assembly by December 1, 1998. The Department of Legislative Services is required to provide staff support.

This bill takes effect July 1, 1998 and sunsets on December 31, 1998.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for the Department of Legislative Services are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Fiscal Analysis

Background: Charter school legislation has been enacted in 29 states and the District of Columbia. Across the country charter school laws vary considerably, with some states like Arizona granting maximum autonomy to charter schools while other states such as Georgia providing schools with limited authority. For example, in Arizona, charter schools are legally independent entities with complete waivers from district and state regulations. In Georgia, however, charter schools are considered part of the school district and are granted

less freedom over budgets and personnel. While different in many ways, certain characteristics are common for all charter schools. Charter schools cannot charge tuition, must be nonsectarian, are subject to federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination, and must comply with all health and safety laws. In addition, most charter schools can negotiate and contract for facilities and services, acquire real property, receive and disburse funds, incur temporary debt, and operate as a business or corporation.

In October 1996, the Maryland State Board of Education created a Public School Study Group to explore issues that could impact charter schools in Maryland. The study group recommended that the State Board develop guidelines for local school systems to use in considering charter school applications and continue to have open communications with the customers and stakeholders of public education concerning charter schools. In July 1997, the State Board of Education established charter school guidelines for local school systems.

Information Source(s): National Conference of State Legislatures, Education Commission of the States, Maryland Association of Boards of Education, Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 2, 1998
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