

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
1999 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 855 (Prince George's County Delegation)

Commerce and Government Matters

Prince George's County - Firefighters
PG 318-99

This bill requires that the Prince George's County Fire Department apply any required training and certification for career firefighters of any rank to all fire fighting personnel, rescue squad personnel, and paramedics. The bill requires the county fire department to have: (1) at least four qualified personnel on fire pumping engines, aerials, and heavy rescue squads before operation or dispatch; and (2) at least two State certified rescue squad personnel or paramedics per medical unit or ambulance designated to provide advanced life support when engaged in patient transport.

The county fire department is also required to adopt, apply, and enforce specified federal standards. The State Fire Marshal is required to enforce the requirements of this bill.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The requirements of this bill could be handled with the existing budgeted resources of the State Fire Marshal.

Local Effect: Significant additional expenditures for Prince George's County. Revenues would not be affected.

Small Business Effect: Meaningful. This bill could result in the closure of an indeterminate number of volunteer fire companies in Prince George's County due to their inability to meet the standards and training requirements of the bill.

Fiscal Analysis

Background: There are 49 fire stations in Prince George's County. Of these, ten are owned by the county and the rest by municipalities or private corporations. The county relies on 406 paid firefighters and approximately 1,200 volunteers. In addition, a recent U.S. District Court ruling clears the way for the county to hire an additional 106 recruits who will be trained as both firefighters and paramedics.

Local Effect: The Prince George's County Fire Department believes that few volunteer firefighters would be inclined or able to receive the training levels required under this bill. Thus, the county assumes that many of the county's current volunteer stations would be forced to close, with the county having to provide firefighting coverage.

Assuming that an indeterminate number of volunteer stations would close, and assuming that the county would provide four paid firefighters for each of three shifts at any closed station, Prince George's County advises that the county would have to hire approximately 300 additional firefighters. The county assumes that, with the required training, any new career firefighters would be hired as an emergency response technician I (starting at about \$30,000 annually) and would cost about \$11,700,000 in fiscal 2000 in salary and fringe benefits. All would automatically receive a 10% salary increase in fiscal 2001. Legislative Services advises that the county's estimate is based on an unknown number of closings and, thus, cannot be verified. However, it is assumed that a significant number of additional firefighters would be necessary.

In addition, the county would have to provide the bill's required training levels and certification for: (1) the new hires; (2) current personnel without such training and certification; and (3) all volunteer firemen. These costs are estimated at approximately \$5,000,000 in fiscal 2000. Out-year costs are difficult to predict. However, some indeterminate amount of ongoing costs are assumed to be needed as paid and volunteer turnover and recruitment occur.

Information Source(s): Department of State Police (Office of the State Fire Marshal), Prince George's County (Prince George's County Fire Department), Department of Legislative Services

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dmm/jr

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