

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
1999 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 376 (Delegate C. Davis)

Commerce and Government Matters

Vehicle Laws - Seat Belt Use

This bill repeals the requirement that the driver of a vehicle be restrained by a seat belt. All other front seat passengers and all passengers under 16 years of age must be restrained by a seat belt.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Potential significant decrease in federal fund revenue. Indeterminate decrease in general fund fine revenue.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Fiscal Analysis

State Effect: The federal government offers incentive grants to encourage the use of seat belts and the enforcement of seat belt laws. The Occupant Protection Incentive Grant program offers incentive funds to states that meet at least four of six criteria: (1) a law requiring safety belt use by all front seat passengers in passenger vehicles; (2) a seat belt law providing primary enforcement; (3) minimum fines or penalties for seat belt and child seat use law violations; (4) a statewide special traffic enforcement program for occupant protection that emphasizes publicity; (5) a statewide child passenger protection education program; and (6) a child passenger protection law that requires minors to be secured properly in a child safety seat. Maryland is expected to receive approximately \$700,000 in fiscal 2000 based on meeting federal eligibility criteria. The State currently meets all but one of the criteria. The bill may be interpreted to put the State beneath the eligibility threshold, thereby

eliminating the grant.

The federal Safety Incentive Grants for Use of Seat Belts program offers funds based on a state's seat belt use rate. It is expected that Maryland could receive from \$100,000 to \$500,000 in fiscal 2000. The bill may lead to a lower rate of seat belt use, in turn lowering the funds available to the State under this program.

In fiscal 1998 there were 151,867 citations issued for seat belt violations. While it is not clear in each of these cases which occupant of the vehicle was unrestrained, it is assumed that most violations were related to the driver of the vehicle not being restrained by a seat belt. The citation carries a fine of \$25. General fund revenues could decrease as fewer citations are issued for violations of seat belt requirements.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation (State Highway Administration, Motor Vehicle Administration), Department of State Police, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

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