

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
1999 Session

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

House Bill 377 (Delegate Hixson. *et al.*)

Ways and Means

Education - Instructional Materials in Nonvisually Accessible Media

This bill requires the State Board of Education to adopt regulations requiring a textbook publisher, upon request, to provide the Instructional Resource Center with an electronic version of pupil edition textbooks for literary subjects, and for nonliterary subjects when the technology is available to convert nonliterary subject textbooks to a format compatible with Braille translation software. The context of the electronic version must meet specified requirements.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. State funding for the Instructional Resource Center would not be affected.

Local Effect: Potential reduction in local school expenditures. Revenues would not be affected.

Small Business Effect: None. It is assumed that textbook publishers are not small businesses.

Fiscal Analysis

Local Effect: Requiring textbook publishers to provide an electronic version of certain pupil edition textbooks used by local school systems to the Instructional Resource Center could reduce local school expenditures by eliminating the need to purchase textbooks in Braille and decode instructional materials into Braille.

The Instructional Resource Center serves as a repository of instructional textbooks written in Braille. The center, located at the Maryland School for the Blind, enables local school

systems to access instructional materials written in Braille or large print for students who are visually impaired. If the center does not have the required instructional materials, the local school system either has to purchase a Braille textbook, which could cost between \$700 and \$1,200, or decode the textbook in Braille.

Pursuant to this bill, local school systems would be able to access an electronic version of certain pupil edition textbooks used in a school's curriculum. Through the use of a computer program, the electronic version can be downloaded into Braille. This would save local school systems considerable time and money in providing instructional resources to visually impaired students. These savings cannot be reliably quantified at this time. Also, it would ensure that visually impaired students across the State have equal access to instructional materials.

Information Source: Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Association of Boards of Education, Howard County Public Schools

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 23, 1999
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