

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
1999 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 1199 (Delegate Kach)

Environmental Matters

Water Wells - Tests

This bill requires the Maryland Department of the Environment to adopt regulations requiring specified tests of water from a well used for domestic purposes. Tests must be conducted for (1) heavy metals; (2) volatile organic compounds; and (3) carcinogenic materials. The regulations apply to any person or unit of State or local government that tests the water from a well.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill would not materially alter State operations or finances.

Local Effect: Significant increase on local government expenditures. **This bill imposes a mandate on a local government unit.**

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Fiscal Analysis

Local Effect: The bill would require local health departments or homeowners to perform extensive testing for new or replacement wells that are constructed for private homes. The Maryland Department of the Environment currently has regulations that allow for this type of testing as needed based on United States Geological Survey data and data from nearby public water systems.

MDE reports that approximately 9,000 private wells are drilled annually across the State. The cost to perform a complete analysis for all heavy metals, volatile organic compounds

(VOCs), and carcinogenic materials would be in excess of \$4,000 per well. This figure is based on monitoring costs and standards for public water systems. As a result, the total cost of performing this testing could be in excess of \$36 million each year. However, it is assumed that at least some of this cost increase would be passed on to home buyers. Therefore, the actual increase in local government expenditures cannot be reliably estimated at this time.

Montgomery County reports that the testing required by the bill would cost between \$4,000-\$5,000 for each well drilled and inspected in the county. This would apply to approximately 1,000 wells each year. As a result, county expenditures could increase by as much as \$5 million annually. Prince George's County reports that the required testing is very expensive and would increase county expenditures. Allegany County reports that the bill would have a minimal impact on county operations and finances.

Small Business Effect: Small businesses that test water samples could benefit as a result of more wells being tested each year for a wider variety of substances.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of the Environment; Allegany, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties; Department of Legislative Services

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dmm/jr

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