

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 442 (Delegate Gladden. *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Education - Public Schools - Lead Exposure in School Buildings - Compliance with State Standards

This bill requires local boards of education to ensure that each school building within its jurisdiction complies with the risk reduction standards for lead. This bill takes effect October 1, 2003.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Complying with the risk reduction standards for lead could increase local school systems expenditures by a significant amount. It is estimated that developing a lead testing program for all public schools in the State could cost from \$250,000 to \$5 million per school system.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: The risk reduction standards for lead applies primarily to residential properties built before 1950 and are not applicable to public school buildings.

Background: Childhood lead poisoning is the number one environmental hazard facing children. Each year over 6,000 children in Baltimore City are diagnosed with dangerous lead levels and 1,200 children are diagnosed with lead poisoning. Baltimore City's lead poisoning rate is over 15 times the national average and Maryland's lead poisoning rate is almost seven times the national average. The high lead poisoning rate in Baltimore City is due to a high

percentage of pre-1950 housing, a high percentage of rental housing, a high concentration of low-income communities, and a failure by government agencies to enforce existing laws aimed at reducing lead poisoning.

Childhood lead poisoning affects both student academic performance and juvenile delinquency. Children who are poisoned by lead are seven times more likely to drop out of school and five times more likely to suffer from learning disabilities. This tends to increase special education costs, lower student academic performance, and increase juvenile delinquency.

Local Fiscal Effect: Public schools constructed prior to 1978 could be affected by lead paint. Most local school systems have not developed or implemented a systemwide lead testing program; however, schools undergoing major renovation or repair in most cases are tested for lead. For example, in Anne Arundel County, the school system tests public schools for lead as part of a renovation or major repair project; however, a countywide lead testing program for all schools is not in place. Developing a lead testing program for all public schools in the State could cost from \$250,000 to \$5 million per school system.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Interagency Committee on Public School Construction, Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Department of the Environment, Department of Legislative Services

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