

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 1275 (Delegate Klausmeier, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Cigarette Restitution Fund - Registered Nurses in Public Schools

This bill requires local boards of education to provide a full-time registered nurse in each public school. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must award grants funded by the Cigarette Restitution Fund to provide a full-time registered nurse in each public school. In addition, the bill adds the provision of full-time registered nurses in public schools to the purposes for which expenditures from the Cigarette Restitution Fund may be made.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund expenditures could increase by \$20.6 million annually beginning in FY 2001, if the State reimbursed local school systems for the full cost of providing registered nurses in every public school and if the Governor includes in the annual budget an appropriation from the Cigarette Restitution Fund for this purpose. The increase in special fund expenditures could exceed \$20.6 million, if the State reimbursed local school systems for the costs of existing registered nurses in public schools.

Local Effect: Local government expenditures could increase by \$20.6 million in FY 2001. State aid for the school nurses could increase as stated above. **This bill may impose a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Local boards of education are required to develop a school health program that provides adequate school health services, instruction in health education, and a healthful school environment. Local boards are not required to provide registered nurses in public schools.

Background: All 24 local school systems in Maryland provide a school health program to students. School health programs are managed by the local school system in 11 jurisdictions, by the local health department in ten jurisdictions, and by a combination of school and health department staff in three jurisdictions. The level of health services provided by local school systems varies by jurisdiction. The health services program in many school systems provides periodic health screenings, maintains student health records, provides wellness programs for students and staff, coordinates and provides health services in conjunction with the county health department, and assists classroom teachers with implementation of the health education curriculum. However, in many smaller school systems, the health program only incorporates the required vision screening, immunization requirements, and scoliosis testing.

The Cigarette Restitution Act of 1999 outlined nine legislative spending priorities for the Cigarette Restitution Fund addressing health- and tobacco-related issues. While the statute mandates that at least 50% of the spending should be focused on the nine priority areas, the Governor has considerable latitude in constructing a budget proposal for the use of the funds.

The Governor's proposed fiscal 2001 budget (including Supplemental Budget No. 1) meets the statutory requirements, with \$90.5 million, or 59% of the settlement funds, allocated to health- and tobacco-related programs. The total fiscal 2001 allowance for the Cigarette Restitution Fund is \$153.5 million.

State and Local Fiscal Effect: There are 1,355 public schools in Maryland. Local school systems employ 784 registered nurses, 157 licensed practical nurses, 700 health aides, and 25 nurse practitioners. Only four local school systems (Allegany, Baltimore, Harford, and Worcester counties) provide a registered nurse in each public school. Eleven local school systems have a registered nurse or licensed practical nurse in each public school. School health personnel are funded primarily by the local school system in 13 jurisdictions, by the local health department in seven jurisdictions, and by both the local health department and local school system in four jurisdictions.

Local school systems would have to hire an additional 545 registered nurses in order to comply with the staffing requirement under the comprehensive smoking prevention program.

Based on an estimated beginning salary of \$30,250, local school expenditures could increase by \$20.6 million in fiscal 2001 (\$16.5 million for salaries and \$4.1 million for fringe benefits).

MSDE is required to award grants to provide a full-time registered nurse in each public school in the State. It is unclear whether the State grants awarded by MSDE would cover the full cost of providing registered nurses in each public school and whether the State would reimburse local school systems for the cost of existing school nurses. The Governor does not have to appropriate funds from the Cigarette Restitution Fund for this purpose. If the

Governor fails to make an appropriation, local school systems would be responsible for the full cost of the additional school nurses.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

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