

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

House Bill 986 (Delegate Hurson. *et al.*)

Commerce and Government Matters

Study Commission on Broadband Internet Transport Service

This bill establishes a 21-member Study Commission on Broadband Internet Transport Service, chaired by the chairman of the Information Technology Board (ITB). The commission will study and make recommendations on specified issues surrounding broadband Internet access in Maryland. The commission must submit a preliminary report by December 31, 2000 and a final report by December 31, 2001 to the Governor and the General Assembly. The reports will include the commission's findings and recommendations, and any proposed legislation, regulation, or other policy that the commission deems appropriate. The Office of the Governor will provide staff support for the commission. Members will not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses.

The bill is effective June 1, 2000 and sunsets on December 31, 2001.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: A half-time contractual employee, at a cost of approximately \$18,540 in FY 2001 and half of that in FY 2002, would be required by the Office of the Governor to staff the study commission. Other commission expenses could be absorbed within existing office resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: None.

Background: The move towards faster “broadband” Internet access will, in many people’s estimation, further revolutionize the Internet and expand its uses exponentially. The faster connections will provide a broad variety of services that are not available at this time or take too long to download on the “narrowband” technologies most Internet users access today. These expanded services include video, animation, video conferencing, on-line schooling, and, potentially, a whole new set of technologies based on more rapid Internet pipelines. There are many issues related to the expansion of broadband Internet access that Maryland and the nation as a whole are contemplating, including broadband’s accessibility, availability, supporting infrastructure, regulation, and content control. Internet advocates would like the Internet to continue on its current development track and want to ensure that broadband technologies further this end.

State Expenditures: The Office of the Governor advises that, given the existing office workload and the timetables established in the bill, a half-time contractual employee would be required to staff the commission. Assuming the employee begins work in July 2000, the fiscal 2001 cost would be approximately \$18,540, \$17,222 in salary and \$1,318 in FICA taxes. The fiscal 2002 costs would be about half of this total due to the December 31, 2001 sunset date. Other costs associated with the commission could be supported with the existing resources of the Office of the Governor.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Business and Economic Development, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 27, 2000
nncsjr Revised - House Third Reader - March 30, 2000

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