

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

Senate Bill 737 (Senator Haines. *et al.*)

Economic and Environmental Affairs

Education - Public Schools - Character Education

This bill requires local boards of education to establish a character education program to be taught in all public schools. The program’s components must be developed in cooperation with students, parents, and the community at large. Character traits that could be taught in each character education program include trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. The State Board of Education must award grants to the local boards for the implementation of innovative character education programs.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures would increase by \$3,068,800 in FY 2001. Future year expenditures reflect inflation. Revenues would not be affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005
GF Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditures	3,068,800	3,087,500	3,091,700	3,096,100	3,100,700
Net Effect	(\$3,068,800)	(\$3,087,500)	(\$3,091,700)	(\$3,096,100)	(\$3,100,700)

Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds

Local Effect: Local school systems would receive approximately \$3 million annually in State funding to develop and implement character education programs. The State would cover the full cost of the program.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: This bill requires local school systems to establish a character education program. The State board must: (1) establish program criteria; (2) provide resources and technical assistance to the local boards; (3) review and analyze the character education programs established by the local boards; (4) identify effective character education programs and practices; (5) disseminate information to the local boards on effective programs; and (6) award grants to local boards for the implementation of innovative character education programs.

Current Law: Local school systems are not statutorily required to include a character education program as part of the school's curriculum; however, all local school systems include some type of character training in their courses.

Background: Five local school systems and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) have established a partnership for promoting character education. The goal of the partnership is to develop and implement models for character education that will support the State's systemic educational reforms. The partnership includes the following school systems: Baltimore City and Baltimore, Calvert, Frederick, and Prince George's counties. MSDE received a \$225,000 federal grant in fiscal 2000 to develop character education programs in the State. Of this amount, \$150,000 was awarded to the five local school systems participating in the partnership and \$75,000 went to fund two staff positions within MSDE. The federal grant is expected to expire in August 2000.

During the 1996-1997 school year, local school systems participated in character education development training activities and in October 1998 a statewide conference was held with over 500 participants and 26 sessions. Training has been scheduled for all 24 local school systems and should be completed by April 2000.

In addition, MSDE is involved in a collaborative partnership with the Governor's Office on Crime Control and Prevention, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Abell Foundation to support local character education programs in public schools.

State Fiscal Effect: The character education partnership identified four areas requiring additional State assistance: (1) training on how to integrate character education in all curricular areas; (2) curriculum models; (3) program materials; and (4) evaluation of instructional materials.

MSDE advises that each local school system would need to receive a \$125,000 grant to develop and implement a character education program. This funding would be used to hire staff positions for each local school system, provide training sessions for local school

teachers, and provide instructional materials. These grants would total \$3 million statewide. In addition, MSDE would need \$68,800 in fiscal 2001 and \$86,100 on an annualized basis to fund two existing positions within the department that are currently funded with a federal grant. The federal grant will expire in fiscal 2000. In sum, general fund expenditures would increase by approximately \$3.1 million annually.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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