

**Department of Legislative Services**

Maryland General Assembly

2001 Session

**FISCAL NOTE**

**Revised**

House Joint Resolution 16 (Delegate Hurson, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Economic and Environmental Affairs

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**Center for Excellence for Autism in Maryland**

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This joint resolution urges the University System of Maryland, the University of Maryland Medical Center, The Johns Hopkins University, The Johns Hopkins Health System, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to investigate the feasibility of working collaboratively in the field of autism research with the objective of establishing joint research and clinical programs that could compete for National Institutes of Health Funding as a Center for Excellence for Autism in Maryland.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Should the terms of this resolution be complied with, expenditures could increase by \$225,000 in FY 2002 to hire a consultant to conduct the feasibility study to create a collaborative effort for a Center for Excellence for Autism in Maryland.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** None applicable.

**Background:** Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. The result of a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain, autism and its associated behaviors have been estimated to occur in as many as 1 in 500 individuals. Autism is four times more prevalent in boys than

girls and knows no racial, ethnic, or social boundaries. Family income, lifestyle, and educational levels do not affect the chance of autism's occurrence.

Autism impacts the normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Children and adults with autism typically have difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities. The disorder makes it hard for them to communicate with others and relate to the outside world. In some cases, aggressive and/or self-injurious behavior may be present. Persons with autism may exhibit repeated body movements (hand flapping, rocking), unusual responses to people or attachments to objects and resistance to changes in routines. Individuals may also experience sensitivities in the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste.

Over 500,000 people in the U.S. today have autism or some form of pervasive developmental disorder. Its prevalence rate makes autism one of the most common developmental disabilities.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Autism Society of America, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Community Public Health Administration, Developmental Disabilities Administration), University System of Maryland, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader –March 6, 2001  
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