

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2001 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 97 (Delegate Boschert)
Ways and Means

**Education Programs - State Reading Advisory Council on Learning-Related
Vision Problems**

This bill establishes a ten-member State Reading Advisory Council on Learning-Related Vision Problems. The purpose of the advisory council is to study and report on efforts to address learning-related vision problems and to provide advice and recommendations on learning-related vision problems, policies, and programs. The council must issue an interim report to the General Assembly by September 30, 2002 and a final report by September 30, 2003. The bill is silent as to staffing, compensation, and expense reimbursement for the council.

The bill sunsets on September 30, 2003.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any costs associated with participation on the advisory council could be met with existing resources.

Local Effect: Creation of the advisory council would not directly affect local finances. However, recommendations made by the council, if implemented, could potentially impact the operations and finances of local school systems.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: There is no State Reading Advisory Council on Learning-Related Vision Problems. COMAR 13A.05.05.07C(1)(a) requires local boards of education or local health departments to provide vision screenings for students in public schools and for students in most private schools and non-public educational facilities. The screenings must be done when a student enters a school system; when the student enters fourth, fifth, or sixth grade; and when the student enters ninth grade.

Background: A resolution adopted at the 1999 National PTA Convention reported that more than 10 million children ten years old or younger suffer from vision problems and that most vision skills are not evaluated during typical vision screenings, therefore leaving most visual skill deficiencies undiagnosed. The resolution states that most learning-related vision problems can be successfully treated when they are accurately diagnosed. The National PTA resolved to: (1) provide information on vision-related learning problems to educators, health officials, and the public; and (2) to urge schools to include tests for vision-related learning problems in their vision screenings.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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ncs/jr

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