

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2001 Session

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

House Bill 1407 (Delegates Love and Sophocleus)

Commerce and Government Matters

Judicial Proceedings

Scooters and In-Line Roller Skates - Protective Helmets

This bill requires children under the age of 16 to wear protective headgear while riding a “scooter” or using in-line roller skates on any property open to or used by the public for pedestrian or vehicle traffic, including highways, sidewalks, and bicycle ways. Acceptable headgear must meet or exceed the standards set by the American National Standards Institute, the Snell Memorial Foundation, or the American Society of Testing and Measurements. Offenders will be issued a warning that informs the offender of the requirement to wear a helmet and provides educational materials about helmet use. A scooter is a two-wheeled vehicle that has handlebars and is designed to be ridden while standing.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The requirement to wear a helmet while in-line skating or riding a scooter is not punishable by a fine. Enforcement could be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Bicyclists under the age of 16 who are riding on publicly accessible property or roads are required to wear an approved helmet except in certain areas of

Ocean City, Maryland. There is no law regarding scooters or in-line roller skates and appropriate safety gear.

Background: There were an estimated 27 million people who used in-line roller skates in 1996 (the most recent year of available data). Of those individuals, 103,000 required emergency care for skating related injuries. By far the most common injuries involved the wrists and hands.

New York is the only nearby state that requires protective headgear while in-line skating.

Scooters have been in existence for decades but decreased in popularity with the advent of bicycles, skateboards, and in-line roller skates. Scooter sales dramatically rebounded with the introduction of a new kind of scooter called a kickboard scooter, which came to market a few years ago. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CSPC) reports that scooter sales, which were almost zero units in 1999, may reach 5 million units this year. These scooters are made from high-grade aluminum, use small low-friction wheels, are controlled by a set of handlebars, and weigh about ten pounds. They are often used to do street acrobatics commonly associated with skateboards.

The CSPC reports that nationwide there were approximately 30,000 emergency room visits related to scooter injuries. About 85% of these injuries occurred to children under the age of 15 with about a third of the injuries being a fracture, usually to the arm or hand. There have been two scooter related deaths, one to an adult who suffered a head injury in a fall and one to a six-year-old boy who rode in front of a moving car.

Several communities have proposed or enacted scooter helmet laws and the New York and New Jersey legislatures are considering similar measures this year.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Transportation (Motor Vehicle Administration), Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

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