

**Department of Legislative Services**  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2001 Session

**FISCAL NOTE**  
**Revised**

Senate Bill 407  
 Finance

Senator Ferguson, et al.)

Environmental Matters

**Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

This bill creates the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing within the Office of the Governor. It provides that the director of the office is to be appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The office would be responsible for promoting the general welfare of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the State. The office must hold at least two public town hall meetings each year to receive comments on the quality of State services and programs and the functions and operations of the office. The office shall be given adequate staff and funding to carry out its duties.

The bill also creates a 16-member Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to advise the office. The office must submit an annual report beginning January 1, 2002 to the Governor and the General Assembly on its activities and programs including recommendations for improved delivery of services.

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures could increase by \$163,300 in FY 2002 for the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Future year expenditures reflect annualization, salary increases, employee turnover, and inflation.

(in dollars)	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	163,300	182,600	190,300	198,400	207,000
Net Effect	(\$163,300)	(\$182,600)	(\$190,300)	(\$198,400)	(\$207,000)

*Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect*

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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## **Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** The responsibilities of the office would include the following services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals: (1) providing, advocating, and coordinating the adoption of public policies, regulations, and programs; (2) improving access to communication and to existing services and programs; (3) providing direct services as appropriate; (4) increasing public awareness of the needs and issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals; (5) working with State and local agencies to ensure access to safety and emergency services, including the acquisition and distribution of visual smoke detectors; (6) developing a referral service; (7) serving as an information clearinghouse on the needs and issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals; (8) working to increase access to educational, health, and social opportunities; (9) working with private organizations, the federal government, and other units of State government to promote economic development; (10) working to eliminate underemployment and unemployment; (11) providing a network through which services provided by State and federal programs can be channeled; and (12) promoting compliance with State, local, and federal laws and policies protecting and serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

**Current Law:** No such office exists.

**Background:** In 1977 the Office for Coordination of Services to the Handicapped was created by the Maryland General Assembly and located within the Executive Department (Chapter 946 of 1977). The office was reorganized in 1984 as the Office for Handicapped Individuals (Chapter 295 of 1984). It was renamed the Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities in 1991 (Chapter 103 of 1991).

The office identifies and evaluates programs and service needs for Maryland citizens with disabilities. It coordinates and supports public and private agencies serving people with disabilities, and provides information and referral services to Maryland citizens with disabilities. The office identifies and recommends methods to remove barriers to the delivery of and access to services and provides technical assistance to other State agencies regarding compliance with laws, policies, and regulations that affect persons with disabilities. It convenes work groups and task forces to respond to specific identified situations or needs and to ensure input from consumers with disabilities on policy development and service delivery.

The Office of Individuals with Disabilities currently has an administrative specialist dedicated solely to deaf and hard of hearing issues.

**State Expenditures:** General fund expenditures could increase by an estimated \$163,268 in fiscal 2002, which accounts for the bill's October 1, 2001 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one director and one clerical employee. It includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses. One administrative specialist from the Governor's Office of Individuals with Disabilities would be transferred to the new office. The total additional expenditures for the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing follow:

Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$100,438
Office Equipment and Vehicle	30,393
Ongoing Operating Expenses	<u>32,437</u>
<b>Total FY 2002 State Expenditures</b>	<b>\$163,268</b>

Future year expenditures reflect: (1) full salaries with a 6.5% increase in fiscal 2003 and a 4.5% increase each year thereafter, with 3% employee turnover; and (2) 1% annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

Task force members would be reimbursed for expenses under the standard State travel regulations. Any such expenditures would depend upon the time, location, and frequency of the task force's meetings. Expenses are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within budgeted agency resources.

The Governor's proposed fiscal 2002 budget does not include funding for an Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** HB 1187 (Delegate R. Baker, *et al.*) – Environmental Matters.

**Information Source(s):** Executive Department, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader – February 13, 2001  
ncs/cer Revised – Senate Third Reader – March 27, 2001  
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