

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2002 Session

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

House Bill 62

(Delegate Stern)

Environmental Matters

Finance

Telephone Lifeline Service - Enhanced Enrollment

This bill requires the Public Service Commission (PSC) to adopt regulations to enhance enrollment in telephone lifeline service through dissemination of information and marketing to eligible subscribers. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and the Department of Human Resources (DHR) may be required to assist in the adoption of these regulations and in the implementation of enhanced enrollment measures.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's requirements could be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: "Telephone lifeline service" is defined as a local telephone service provided to eligible subscribers that provides discounted residential local exchange dial access plus the first 30 residential local untimed messages per billing month.

The definition of "enhanced enrollment" includes dissemination of information regarding the telephone lifeline service to applicants and participants in the Maryland Energy Assistance Program, the Universal Service Program, the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, or the Food Stamp Program, and jointly marketing and administering the application procedures for the telephone lifeline service to eligible subscribers.

PSC may require DHR, DHCD, and DHMH to assist in the adoption and implementation of regulations to implement enhanced enrollment in the telephone lifeline service, and PSC may enter into memoranda of understanding with the agencies regarding respective duties in enhanced enrollment measures.

Current Law: DHR certifies to the phone company the eligibility of an individual to participate in the telephone lifeline service program if the individual: (1) participates in any of several assistance programs administered by DHR; (2) receives State-funded public assistance benefits; or (3) receives supplemental security income under Title XVI of the federal Social Security Act.

There are no statutory requirements relating to the marketing of the program or the direct involvement of any agency other than DHR.

Background: Tel-Life Link-Up is a federally mandated program that provides subsidized telephone service to qualifying individuals. The cost for providing Tel-Life is reflected in residential and commercial users' telephone bills. DHR reports that Tel-Life currently receives approximately 400 applications per month, and that an estimated 325 per month are approved. There are approximately 3,500 individuals currently receiving Tel-Life service. DHR also supplies brochures and applications to requesting agencies that refer individuals to the Tel-Life program.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Human Resources, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Public Service Commission, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 22, 2002
lc/cer Revised - House Third Reader - March 20, 2002

Analysis by: Mitchell J. McCalmon

Direct Inquiries to:
John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510