

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 970

(Delegate C. Davis)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental  
Affairs

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Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities

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This bill establishes a 15-member Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities within the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to, among other things, advise State agencies on environmental justice and related community issues. The commission must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 1 of each year. MDE must provide staff for the commission.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill codifies an existing commission and provides for the continuation of that commission beyond December 31, 2003. Accordingly, staffing costs for MDE would continue beyond FY 2004. Any expense reimbursements for commission members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Bill Summary:** The commission must review and analyze the impact of current State laws and policies on the issue of environmental justice and sustainable communities; assess the adequacy of State and local laws to address the issue; coordinate with the Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council on recommendations;

develop criteria to assess whether communities may be experiencing environmental justice issues; and recommend options to the Governor for addressing issues, concerns, or problems related to environmental justice.

**Current Law:** In March 2001, the Governor established the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities by executive order. The commission advises State agencies on issues related to environmental justice and sustainable communities. With the Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council, it coordinates recommendations on such issues. The commission is required to analyze and review what impact current State laws, regulations, and policies have on the equitable treatment and protection of communities threatened by development or environmental pollution and determine what areas in the State need immediate attention. The commission also must assess the adequacy of current statutes to ensure environmental justice and develop criteria to pinpoint which communities need sustaining. MDE staffs the commission. Members are not entitled to reimbursement for expenses, but would be under this bill. Authorization for the commission expires December 31, 2003.

**Background:** Chapter 741 of 1997 established the Maryland Advisory Council on Environmental Justice to make recommendations for assessing and implementing environmental protection to communities in a fair and equitable manner throughout the State. Chapter 55 of 1999 extended the council through December 31, 1999. Chapter 585 of 2000 established the Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council to recommend, in part, solutions to environmental justice issues affecting the health of children.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of the Environment, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 10, 2003  
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