

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 620 (Senator Kittleman, *et al.*)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

State Board of Education - Graduation Requirements - Student Service

This bill prohibits the State Board of Education from requiring student service as a condition of graduation. A local school system may implement a student service program in which students may choose to participate.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Federal revenues from the National Community Service program could decrease. State funding of student service programs could also decrease.

Local Effect: Federal revenues from the National Community Service program, most of which are distributed to local school systems, could decrease. Local funding of student service programs could also decrease.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: By regulation, students must complete either 75 hours of student service or a locally-designed program of student service that has been approved by the State Superintendent of Schools in order to graduate.

Background: In 1992, the State Board of Education mandated service-learning as a graduation requirement, making Maryland the first state to require student service as a statewide condition of graduation. The class of 1997 was the first class that had to complete student service to graduate.

Service-learning programs are designed and implemented by the local school systems. Most local school systems design programs that require students to use their academic skills to solve community problems. The Maryland Student Service Alliance lists seven strategies of service-learning that make the projects meaningful and effective:

- meet a recognized need in the community;
- achieve curricular objectives through service-learning;
- reflect throughout the service-learning experience;
- develop student responsibility;
- establish community partnerships;
- plan ahead for service-learning; and
- equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service.

The fiscal 2004 State budget includes \$149,481 in general funds for the Maryland Student Service Alliance.

State and Local Revenues: Federal funds from the National Community Service program could be jeopardized if service-learning requirements are eliminated or reduced significantly. In fiscal 2003, the State is receiving nearly \$650,000 from the program and the fiscal 2004 State budget includes \$540,000 from the program. The majority of the funding is distributed by the Maryland State Department of Education to local school systems. About half of fiscal 2003 program funding is formula-based, and the other half has been awarded to Maryland through a competitive process. Funding under the program requires an equal match from the State and local school systems combined. Therefore, any decrease in federal funding could also decrease State and local expenditures.

The bill would only repeal the graduation requirement associated with service-learning programs; it would not require local school systems to eliminate the programs. If local school systems maintain student service programs as electives, federal funding would not be affected. Therefore, any decreases in federal revenues resulting from this bill are expected to be relatively small.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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mdf/hlb

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