

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2003 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Revised**

Senate Bill 703

(Senator Britt, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

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**Task Force to Study the Availability of Audiology and Speech-Language Services**

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This bill establishes a 17-member Task Force to Study the Availability of Audiology and Speech-Language Services for children in kindergarten through grade 12 in public schools. The task force must study and consider the services provided by audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs), the availability of licensed audiologists and SLPs in local school systems, and the impact that insufficient numbers of audiologists and SLPs have on local school systems. The task force must make recommendations regarding: (1) the need, if any, for audiologists and SLPs in public schools; (2) methods to recruit and retain audiologists and SLPs; and (3) whether the caseloads of audiologists and SLPs should be adjusted to increase services for children in need. The task force must submit a written report by December 31, 2003 to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must provide staff for the task force.

The bill is effective July 1, 2003 and sunsets June 30, 2004.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Any expense reimbursements for task force members could be absorbed within existing budgets. MSDE could staff the task force with existing resources.

**Local Effect:** Any expense reimbursements for local officials on the task force could be met with existing budgeted resources.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Current Law:** None applicable.

**Background:** A September 2001 MSDE survey indicated that 82 of 1,240 SLP positions in local school systems were vacant. This was most pronounced in Baltimore City, where more than one-third of budgeted positions (58 out of 148) were unfilled. As a result, Baltimore City has resorted to contracting for some of its SLP services. In fiscal 2002, the Baltimore City Public School System contracted for \$4.5 million in SLP services, with daily rates ranging from \$380 to \$500. It is not known how many other local school systems have been forced to contract for audiologist and SLP services.

Bills introduced last year in the House and Senate would have authorized the State Board of Education to provide State salary stipends to audiologists and SLPs who work in local school systems. The bills did not pass.

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### Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 10, 2003  
mld/hlb Revised - Senate Third Reader - March 21, 2003  
Revised - Enrolled Bill - April 23, 2003

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