

Department of Legislative Services

Maryland General Assembly

2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Revised

House Bill 635

(Delegate Hixson, *et al.*)

Ways and Means

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Education - Early Childhood Educational and Developmental Programs

This bill authorizes early childhood educational and developmental programs in Maryland to enter into an agreement to promote the programs in consultation with the Child Care Resource and Referral Network. The agreement will bring the programs together to develop a plan to provide information to the parents of low income and at-risk children regarding the importance of early childhood education and the availability of early childhood development services. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Department of Human Resource's Child Care Administration (CCA) must assist in the development of the agreement, monitor the results of the agreement, and submit an annual report to the General Assembly on the effectiveness of the agreement. Beginning in fiscal 2005, the Governor must include in the annual State budget an appropriation for Head Start and Judy Centers that is at least equal to the fiscal 2003 appropriation for the programs.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Mandating that funding for Head Start and Judy Centers continue at FY 2003 levels would not increase expenditures. However, it would reduce flexibility in the general fund budget. Revenues would not be affected.

Local Effect: Local personnel involved in early childhood educational and developmental programs could participate in the establishment of an agreement and the promotion of early childhood programs with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Early childhood educational and developmental programs are not specifically authorized to enter into agreements to promote the programs.

Background: The Child Care Resource and Referral Network is a public-private partnership made up of 13 regional child care resource and referral centers. The network began as a demonstration project and was later expanded statewide. The 13 regional centers supported by the network provide parents with information related to child care services within their geographical areas. The network oversees the regional centers and provides services to improve the quality, availability, and affordability of child care statewide.

The enhancement of early childhood education programs was one of the recommendations of the Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence (Thornton Commission). The commission recommended that local school systems be required to implement full-day kindergarten programs for all children and prekindergarten programs for disadvantaged children. The recommendation was made with an appreciation of the growing body of research that demonstrates the importance of quality early childhood educational experiences. In addition, education experts who contributed to the professional judgement adequacy study that was conducted for the commission emphasized early educational programs when they were designing programs that would adequately serve Maryland's students. The commission's kindergarten and prekindergarten recommendations were included in the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act that was passed last year.

State Expenditures: Beginning in fiscal 2005, the bill requires the Governor to include in the annual State budget appropriations for Head Start and Judy Centers that are equal to the fiscal 2003 appropriations for the initiatives. The State is providing \$3.0 million for Head Start and \$7.6 million for Judy Centers in fiscal 2003, and the proposed fiscal 2004 State budget includes the same level of funding for the programs. It is assumed that these programs would continue at the current funding levels with or without the bill; therefore, mandating the continuation of the programs has no fiscal impact. The requirement that the programs continue at their current funding levels does, however, limit flexibility in the budgeting process.

In addition to State funding, local agencies are receiving an estimated \$75 million in federal Head Start funding in fiscal 2003. This funding goes directly from the federal government to local agencies and does not pass through the State budget. The bill, therefore, would not impact federal funding for Head Start.

MSDE and CCA could meet the administrative reporting requirements of the legislation with existing resources. This assumes, however, that the bill would not require significant enhancements to current monitoring and reporting activities performed by the agencies. If greater involvement in early childhood educational and developmental programs is required of the agencies, more personnel would be needed.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Human Resources, Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

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