

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 875 (Delegate Rudolph)  
Environmental Matters

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Vehicle Laws - Driver Education - Alternative Program

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This bill authorizes the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to approve an alternative driver education program to the one currently required as a prerequisite for taking the driver skills or road tests for a provisional license.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Minimal or none. The bill simply authorizes the MVA to approve a program – it does not require the agency to implement one.

**Local Effect:** Minimal. Only a limited number of local governments operate driver education programs through the school system.

**Small Business Effect:** Potentially meaningful to the extent that driving education schools that are small businesses would be able to offer alternative driver education programs.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** The MVA monitors and regulates driving schools and instructors. Driving schools and instructors must be licensed and the schools must provide a surety bond. Also, the MVA prescribes the curriculum that must be used in the drivers' schools.

Chapter 350 of 2000 directs the MVA to consult with the Maryland State Department of Education in adopting and enforcing regulations for a standardized driver education program. The law stipulates that the regulations administered by the MVA include student performance standards based on the standardized curriculum approved by the

MVA. The standards include at least 30 hours of classroom instruction, 6 hours of highway driving instruction, and completion of a skills log book. Class size is limited to 30 students.

The MVA may issue an instructional learner's permit to anyone who is age 15 and 9 months. The permit allows an individual to drive if they are accompanied by an individual who is at least 21 years old and has been licensed for three years. The learner's permit holder cannot take the driver skills or road test to obtain a provisional license until he or she successfully completes an approved driver's education program.

**Background:** The MVA does not authorize schools to use alternative teaching methods, such as computer-assisted learning or home schooling. However, two companies are approved to provide driver improvement courses and point system conferences using the Internet and contracts for two others are pending. The MVA advises that 122 driving schools operate at one or more locations throughout the State.

Legislation proposed in 2001 (HB 963) would have prohibited the MVA from offering or providing any driver instruction program over the Internet unless specifically authorized by law. The Governor vetoed the bill, citing that the decision to provide such instruction should be the MVA's and that the bill's policy conflicted with the Electronic Government Initiative enacted in 2000 (Chapter 5). The initiative requires all units of the executive branch to have 50% of their public information and services available over the Internet by 2002.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

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

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