

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2004 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 850 (Senator Greenip, *et al.*)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Public High School - Graduation Requirements - Community Service

This bill prohibits the State Board of Education from requiring community service as a condition of graduation.

The bill is effective July 1, 2004.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Federal funds from the National Community Service program could decrease.

Local Effect: Federal funds from the National Community Service program, most of which are distributed to local school systems and require a local match, could decrease. Local school expenditures for 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.

State funding for the Maryland Student Service Alliance was eliminated in fiscal 2004, and no funding for the program is included in the proposed fiscal 2005 State budget.

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 2004, the State is receiving \$540,000 from the program, and the proposed fiscal 2005 State budget includes \$643,991 in federal funds from the program. The majority of the funding is distributed by the Maryland State Department of Education to local school systems. The funding requires a local match equal to the federal funds provided, so if local school systems decrease spending on service-learning programs as a result of this bill, federal funding could decrease accordingly.

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: This bill was introduced at the 2003 session as SB 620 and received an unfavorable report from the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Cross File: None.

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

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mam/hlb

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