

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2004 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1273
Ways and Means

(Delegate Menes)

Teachers - Certification - Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Course Credit

This bill requires the State Superintendent of Schools and the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) to set a minimum number of semester hours covering fetal alcohol spectrum disorders required to qualify for a Maryland teacher's certificate. Applicants for teacher certification must complete the required semester hours. Teachers who hold certificates as of July 1, 2004 must complete the required number of semester hours as professional development credits over their next certification renewal period.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2004.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Higher education expenditures could increase at the University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's College of Maryland to develop and implement new courses on fetal alcohol spectrum disorders for their teacher preparation programs. The State Superintendent and PSTEB could set the minimum requirements with existing resources. Revenues would not be affected.

Local Effect: Local school expenditures could increase to pay for additional professional development credits for teachers.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The State Superintendent of Schools certifies the professional personnel in each public school in accordance with the bylaws, rules, and regulations of the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board. Initial teacher certification is usually obtained by graduating from an approved teacher preparation program, although an alternate route into teaching, the Maryland Resident Teacher Program, is also available to teaching candidates and local school systems. To renew professional certification, six semester hours of approved professional development credits must be earned. Professional certification must be renewed every five years. Renewal requirements may be waived for a professionally certificated employee if the local superintendent of schools recommends renewal and the employee is at least 55 years old or has been employed for 25 years or more.

Background: Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders are caused by mothers drinking alcohol while they are pregnant and are the leading known cause of mental retardation in children. The disorders range from fetal alcohol syndrome, the most severe disorder level, to other milder disorders such as fetal alcohol effects, alcohol-related birth defects, and alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorders. Fetal alcohol syndrome makes up approximately 10% of the spectrum of the disorders, but disorders within other parts of the spectrum can also lead to serious social and behavioral problems.

State Expenditures: Institutions of higher education in Maryland would be required to add at least one course on fetal alcohol spectrum disorders to existing teacher preparation programs to ensure that their teacher education students could meet Maryland certification standards. The increase, if any, in higher education expenditures for Maryland's public institutions of higher education cannot be reliably estimated at this time.

Local Expenditures: Local school systems typically reimburse their teachers for continuing professional development courses taken to maintain certification. To the extent that the bill would result in teachers taking more total professional development courses, local school expenditures could increase.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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mh/hlb

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