

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2004 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 1016

(Delegate Cryor, *et al.*)

Judiciary

Judicial Proceedings

Task Force on Missing Vulnerable Adults

This bill creates a Task Force on Missing Vulnerable Adults. The task force must: (1) identify, access, and compile data about missing adults; (2) make recommendations on establishing better communication between counties and the State when vulnerable adults are missing; (3) make recommendations to establish a system to locate and identify missing vulnerable adults and identify unclaimed deceased adults who may be missing vulnerable adults; (4) make recommendations for law enforcement protocols to work with the broadcast media to locate missing adults; (5) investigate integration with Amber Alert and the broadcast media in locating missing vulnerable adults; and (6) report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 1, 2005. The Department of State Police will staff the task force. The bill terminates October 31, 2005.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Maryland does not have a statewide plan to address missing vulnerable adults. The AMBER plan is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement agencies

and broadcasters to activate an urgent bulletin in the most serious child abduction cases. Broadcasters use the Emergency Alert System, formerly called the Emergency Broadcast System, to air a description of the abducted child and suspected abductor. This is the same concept used during severe weather emergencies. AMBER Alert information is coordinated by the Maryland State Police.

Background: Since the original AMBER Plan was established in 1996, 86 modified versions have been adopted at local, regional, and statewide levels, as well as in Canada. In August 2002, Maryland became an AMBER Alert state. There are now 37 states that use such systems to help find abducted children.

The alerts, named after nine-year old Amber Hagerman who was kidnapped while riding her bicycle in Arlington, Texas and killed, rely on the use of highway message boards as well as television and radio stations to broadcast the messages. They are issued only when, after a confirmed abduction, police believe that a child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death and have descriptive information about the child and suspect. The AMBER Alert system is credited with the rescue of at least 45 children since the program was begun in 1996.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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Analysis by: Lisa A. Daigle

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510