

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2004 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Revised**

House Bill 1477  
Ways and Means

(Delegate Marriott)

Budget and Taxation and  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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**Task Force on the Role of Alternative Providers in Supporting the Bridge to  
Excellence in Public Schools Act**

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This bill establishes a Task Force on the Role of Alternative Providers in Supporting the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act staffed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The task force must submit a report of its activities, findings, and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 2004.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2004 and sunsets June 30, 2005.

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**Fiscal Summary**

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

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** The task force must:

- (1) survey existing alternative early learning and child care providers to determine their capacity and capability to provide prekindergarten and kindergarten services required under the Bridge to Excellence Act;

- (2) review the capacity of local school systems to meet the requirements under the Bridge to Excellence Act for prekindergarten and kindergarten services for the 2007-2008 school year and each following school year;
- (3) review the master plans submitted by local school systems to meet the requirements of the Bridge to Excellence Act for prekindergarten and kindergarten services for the 2007-2008 school year and each following school year, and the extent to which the master plans leverage the capacity and capability of alternative early learning and child care providers to meet the requirements under the Bridge to Excellence Act;
- (4) review best practices in other states in utilizing alternative early learning and child care providers to provide prekindergarten and kindergarten services for public school students;
- (5) identify any obstacles in the State in utilizing the capability of alternative early learning and child care providers as part of an overall strategy to provide prekindergarten and kindergarten services required under the Bridge to Excellence Act and the practicable and feasible steps that would be necessary to overcome these obstacles, including associated costs;
- (6) identify the potential costs and savings for the State and for local governments if alternative early learning and child care providers are enabled to work in collaboration with local school systems to provide prekindergarten and kindergarten services required under the Bridge to Excellence Act;
- (7) develop a report and series of recommendations for the Governor and the General Assembly to enable alternative early learning and child care providers to provide prekindergarten and kindergarten services required under the Bridge to Excellence Act;
- (8) assist the Governor and State and local agencies in implementing the recommendations of the task force; and
- (9) take other action as necessary and proper to carry out the purposes of the task force.

**Background:** In appreciation of the growing body of research that clearly displays the positive impact of early childhood educational experiences, the Commission on Education, Finance, Equity, and Excellence (Thornton Commission) recommended that full-day kindergarten programs be provided for all students and that prekindergarten programs be available to all disadvantaged four-year old children. These recommendations were codified in the Bridge to Excellence Act of 2002, and local school systems are required to provide the services by the 2007-2008 school year. Increased formula funding under the Act is tied to these mandates. Funding for full-day kindergarten is provided through an increase (from 0.5 to 1.0) in the kindergarten full-time equivalent rate used to calculate State aid. Funding for prekindergarten is provided through the compensatory education formula.

Local school systems have been providing prekindergarten programs for high risk children for many years, with some of the funding for the programs coming from Extended Elementary Education Program grants from the State. Just over half of Maryland kindergartners currently attend full-day programs, and six local school systems, Baltimore City and Allegany, Caroline, Garrett, Prince George's, and Talbot counties, provide full-day programs for all kindergarten students. A recent study conducted by Montgomery County Public Schools, where full-day kindergarten programs have been strategically targeted in areas with many high-need students, found significant gains in the performance of second-graders who attended full-day kindergarten programs. The gains successfully narrowed achievement disparities between schools in less affluent areas and schools in wealthier areas.

**State Fiscal Effect:** MSDE advises that it would incur expenditures of approximately \$15,000 in fiscal 2005 to carry out the requirements of the bill. The projected costs include facilities rental, printing, transcription of proceedings, and supplies. The Department of Legislative Services advises that the agency would likely be able to handle staffing duties with existing resources. The bill's December 1, 2004 report deadline could divert staff resources from other responsibilities.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Governor's Office (Office for Children, Youth, and Families),  
Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 26, 2004  
ncs/hlb Revised - House Third Reader - April 8, 2004

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