

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2004 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 988

(Chairman, Ways and Means Committee)
(By Request – Departmental – Education)

Ways and Means

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Education - Transitioning Students with Disabilities

This departmental bill requires the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to assign a rehabilitation counselor to each public high school to act as a liaison. DORS must establish a cooperative agreement with each local board of education in order to ensure appropriate transition services for students with disabilities. For each transitioning student who is eligible for rehabilitation services, DORS must develop, in consultation with the local board of education, an individualized plan for employment after the student's graduation.

The bill also repeals an outdated section of law requiring an Interagency State Plan for Transitioning Students with Disabilities to be implemented from fiscal 1997 to 1999.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2004.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. This bill codifies the existing practices of DORS.

Local Effect: Local school systems could continue to participate in the processes defined in the bill with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: MSDE has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). Legislative Services concurs with this assessment. (The attached assessment does not reflect amendments to the bill.)

Analysis

Current Law: DORS is established within MSDE and is required to rehabilitate disabled students and place them in gainful employment; rehabilitate individuals with disabilities to have them function more independently; and cooperate with other public and private departments, agencies, and institutions to develop and provide programs, facilities, and services necessary or desirable to rehabilitate individuals with disabilities. From fiscal 1997 to 1999, DORS was required to develop and implement an Interagency State Plan for Transitioning Students with Disabilities. The purpose of the plan was to undertake changes in the structure, quality, and availability of transition services in order to affect broad improvement in the quality and delivery of the services.

Background: The mission of DORS is to provide leadership and support in promoting the employment, economic self-sufficiency, and independence of individuals with disabilities. MSDE advises that this bill is necessary to codify longstanding practices of DORS. For many years, DORS has developed, implemented, and monitored cooperative agreements with local school systems to facilitate the transition of high school students with disabilities into postsecondary education and careers. One of the main elements of the collaboration has been the assignment of a professional rehabilitation counselor to each high school. The counselor provides a crucial link for students between completion of public schooling and successful employment.

The proposed fiscal 2005 State budget includes an enhancement for the DORS Client Services program, which provides medical and other support to individuals with disabilities who can be productive in the labor force with these supports. Currently, insufficient funding requires DORS to operate under an “order of selection” policy, serving the most severely disabled of its clients first while others remain on a waiting list. Increased fiscal 2005 funds of \$5.3 million, including \$4.1 million in federal funds and \$1.2 million in general funds, will allow the program to expand services to 900 additional clients. The increased general fund appropriation allows the program to leverage the additional federal funds.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 9, 2004
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