

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 351

(Senator Hooper, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environmental Matters

Public Health - Children - Notice of Drinking Water Contamination

This bill requires water suppliers to provide written notification to public schools, noncollegiate private schools, family day care centers, and child care centers when the water supply is not in compliance with State drinking water regulations. The schools and centers must send written notification of the problem to the parents and guardians of enrolled children within 10 days after receiving notice from the water suppliers. Notifications from the schools and centers must identify the contaminants and their levels and describe the way the school or center will deal with the problem.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Agencies responsible for licensing private schools, home day care centers, and child care centers could monitor compliance with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: Local school expenditures could increase minimally to notify parents and guardians about drinking water contamination.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: A public water system must notify the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the local media when the system is not in compliance with State drinking water regulations. The notification must state the nature and possible health effects that may result and must be published in a newspaper and included on water bills. Schools, day care centers, and

child care centers are not specifically required to provide notice of drinking water contamination.

Background: Concerns about drinking water contamination were heightened recently when methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE), a gasoline additive, was discovered in the groundwater in Harford County and in the water supply well located on property that houses a prekindergarten program. Although there are limited data on the human health effects of MTBE when ingested through drinking water, the EPA has advised that MTBE is a potential human carcinogen at high doses. Lower levels of MTBE can make drinking water undrinkable due to its offensive taste and color. Twenty states have either partially or completely banned the use of MTBE statewide.

Emergency regulations addressing MTBE contamination, which require improved release detection and site monitoring, took effect January 26, 2005.

Local Expenditures: School systems could notify parents and guardians with only minimal cost increases associated with printing and copying written notifications. MDE advises that drinking water contamination that would trigger the required notification would not occur more than once or twice per year, and would affect only a small number of schools.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1375 (Delegate Jennings, *et al.*) – Environmental Matters.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of the Environment, Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 4, 2005
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