

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 312
Economic Matters

(Delegate Frush, *et al.*)

Consumer Protection - Household Goods Movers - Charges for Services

This bill requires a household goods mover, under the Maryland Household Goods Movers Act, to provide a consumer with a written estimate of the cost of providing household goods moving services before providing the services. The household goods mover may not charge a consumer an amount that exceeds 10% of the estimate without the consumer's written consent.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Assuming that the Consumer Protection Division receives fewer than 50 complaints per year stemming from this bill, any additional workload could be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Under the Maryland Household Goods Movers Act, a household goods mover must provide a consumer with a written receipt that states: (1) the household goods mover's legal name; and (2) the address and telephone number of either the household goods mover's resident agent in the State, or if there is no resident agent, the principal place of business. Violation of the Act is an unfair or deceptive trade practice under the Maryland Consumer Protection Act. Violators may also be subject to any other

applicable civil or criminal action. Household goods are goods used primarily for personal, family, or household purposes.

Background: Under federal law and regulations, an interstate mover may give either a nonbinding or a binding written estimate of the cost of a move. An interstate mover may only charge for a binding estimate. Nonbinding estimates must be provided free of charge. An interstate mover may not charge more than the quoted price of a binding estimate, unless additional services are provided. If a nonbinding estimate is given, the interstate mover may not require the customer to pay more than 10% more than the original estimate at the time of delivery. The customer then has at least 30 days after delivery to pay any remaining charges. The federal regulations do not apply to intrastate moves.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Office of the Attorney General (Consumer Protection Division),
Department of Legislative Services

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mp/jr

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