

Department of Legislative Services  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
 Revised

House Bill 710

(Delegate Heller, *et al.*)

Ways and Means

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Education - Blind and Visually Impaired Students - Instructional Materials

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to collaborate with and provide support to the Instructional Resources Center (IRC) to develop procedures to coordinate the statewide availability of textbooks and instructional materials that may be accessed using specialized formats that use the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards (NIMAS). Beginning in fiscal 2008, the Governor must include \$150,000 in the annual State budget for IRC.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2006.

Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures would increase by \$150,000 annually beginning in FY 2008 to support IRC. Revenues would not be affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	0	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000
Net Effect	\$0	(\$150,000)	(\$150,000)	(\$150,000)	(\$150,000)

*Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect*

**Local Effect:** Adding language to local school system bid requests for textbooks and other printed instructional materials would not significantly affect the cost of the procurements.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

## Analysis

**Bill Summary:** The procedures developed by IRC must require MSDE and local boards of education to include language in textbook and other printed instructional material procurement contracts requiring the publisher to provide materials in formats that meet NIMAS or in other specialized formats. A publisher may not be required to provide an electronic copy of instructional materials copyrighted before July 1, 2007. The State Board of Education must coordinate with the National Instructional Materials Access Center to facilitate the timely conversion of instructional materials sent by publishers into specialized formats. Beginning July 1, 2007, IRC must make reasonable efforts to provide instructional materials in the proper format to blind and visually impaired students on the first day of classes each year or in a timely manner.

The bill also requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) and the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDD) to review the research and recommendations developed by the Association of American Publishers' National Alternative Formats Initiative regarding approaches and technologies to best provide textbooks to postsecondary education students with print disabilities. By December 31, 2006, MHEC and MDD must report on procedures to ensure that postsecondary students with print disabilities have access to instructional materials.

**Current Law:** MSDE must develop procedures to coordinate the statewide availability of textbooks and supplementary education instructional materials in nonvisually accessible media.

**Background:** NIMAS is a collection of very specific electronic source files that can be created by textbook publishers. From the file formats provided by publishers, textbooks can be transformed into versions that are accessible to individuals who are blind, visually impaired, and otherwise disabled. NIMAS files can be sent to the National Instructional Materials Access Center for conversion into nonvisually accessible formats.

**State Expenditures:** General fund expenditures will increase by \$150,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2008, which reflects the funding mandate in the bill. It is assumed that IRC will use the funding to hire one additional specialist to develop the required procurement procedures and support further enhancements to services for blind and visually impaired students. The remaining funds would be used to purchase computer hardware and software necessary to access and store files sent by publishers. Acquiring materials from publishers in the proper format for nonvisual access is free.

There would be no additional cost for MHEC and MDD to review the recommendations of the Association of American Publishers' National Alternative Formats Initiative and

provide a report on procedures to ensure that postsecondary students with print disabilities have access to instructional materials.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** SB 392 (Senator Conway, *et al.*) – Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 21, 2006  
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