

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2006 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

House Bill 137  
Appropriations

(Delegate Krebs, *et al.*)

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**Higher Education - Teacher Education Reading Programs - Alignment with Federal Law**

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This bill requires public institutions of higher education that have teacher education programs to provide teacher education reading curricula that are aligned with the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Public institutions of higher education must revise their teacher education courses to place strong emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension. In order to receive State funding under the Sellinger formula, private institutions of higher education that have teacher education programs must comply with the same requirements.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None. Efforts to ensure that teacher education programs at institutions of higher education are aligned with federal standards are underway and would not be affected by the bill.

**Local Effect:** None. Efforts to ensure that teacher education programs at community colleges are aligned with federal standards are underway and would not be affected by the bill.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** A public institution of higher education that offers a teacher education program is not specifically required to align its reading curricula with NCLB or to place a

strong emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension in its reading curriculum. The State Board of Education and the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board develop rules and regulations for the preparation of teachers.

To qualify for State funding, a private institution of higher education must: (1) be a nonprofit institution; (2) be approved by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC); (3) be accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools; (4) have awarded degrees to at least one class of students; (5) maintain at least one earned degree program other than a seminarian or theological program; and (6) submit proposals for new or modified programs to MHEC.

**Background:** NCLB, which was signed into law in January 2002, requires the use of scientifically-based teaching methods. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) advises that a committee of local school system and higher education representatives met in spring 2004 to ensure that teacher education programs in Maryland institutions of higher education include scientifically-based methods for reading instruction. State guidelines for teacher education programs were subsequently revised, and institutions of higher education have been modifying their reading instruction courses to make sure they are aligned with the new guidelines. Teacher education programs risk losing State accreditation if they fail to meet the required standards.

The University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, St. Mary's College of Maryland, and the Maryland Independent Colleges and Universities Association have all reported that they are participating in the State effort or that their teacher education programs are already meeting the requirements of the bill. MSDE advises that it expects all in-state programs to meet the guidelines by next school year, if not sooner.

Reading First was one of the new federal aid programs authorized by NCLB. It offers competitive federal grants for the purpose of enhancing reading programs for children in kindergarten to third grade through teacher professional development, diagnostic assessment of students' abilities, the purchase of reading materials, and any other ongoing efforts to improve reading instruction. Phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension must be emphasized in the programs. The proposed fiscal 2007 State budget includes \$9.1 million in federal funds for local school systems from the Reading First program.

## Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** A similar bill was introduced last year as HB 349. It received an unfavorable report from the House Appropriations Committee.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Independent College and University Association, Morgan State University, University System of Maryland, Maryland Association of Community Colleges, Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Higher Education Commission, St. Mary's College of Maryland, U.S. Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 30, 2006  
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