

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 118

(Chairman, Finance Committee)

(By Request – Departmental – Aging)

Finance

Health and Government Operations

Department of Aging - Senior Citizen Activities Center Operating Fund

This departmental bill clarifies that the Secretary of Business and Economic Development determines which counties are “distressed” for purposes of distributing money from the Senior Citizen Activities Center Operating Fund within the Department of Aging. The bill also clarifies that spouses of senior citizens may receive senior citizen activity center services.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The change is technical in nature and would not directly affect governmental finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: The Department of Aging has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). Legislative Services concurs with this assessment.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 635 of 2000 established the continuing, nonlapsing Senior Citizen Activities Center Operating Fund within the Department of Aging to provide additional funds to economically distressed areas for senior citizen activities centers. The Governor must include a \$500,000 appropriation in the annual budget for the fund.

Funds are distributed through a competitive grant process. At least 50% of the funds must go to qualified distressed counties based on need.

A qualified distressed county must develop and submit a local strategic plan for economic development to the Secretary of Business and Economic Development that is approved by the Secretary. However, the statute's wording is ambiguous and could be interpreted as requiring the plan to be approved by the Secretary of Aging. A qualifying county also must meet specific statutory thresholds of greater unemployment and lower per capita personal income than the rest of the State.

The Secretary of Business and Economic Development approves local strategic plans for economic development in distressed counties.

Section 26 of Article 70B allows senior citizens and their spouses to access senior citizen activities centers. Meanwhile, Section 33 of Article 70B states that a senior citizen activities center is to provide services to senior citizens, and does not include senior citizens' spouses.

Background: There are 112 senior centers in Maryland offering exercise programs, health screenings, and wellness seminars, according to the Department of Aging. Maryland jurisdictions currently defined as economically distressed for the purposes of Senior Citizen Activities Center Operating Fund eligibility are Baltimore City and Allegany, Caroline, Dorchester, Garrett, Somerset, and Worcester counties. The fiscal 2007 proposed budget includes \$500,000 in general funds for the Senior Citizen Activities Center Operating Fund.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Aging, Department of Legislative Services

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M/jr

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