

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 109

(Delegates Leopold and V. Clagett)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Maryland Department of the Environment - Sound Level Meters - Use by Counties

This bill requires the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to maintain at least two sound level meters and calibration of those meters. Upon request of a “qualified county,” MDE must make a sound level meter available to the county for the purpose of enforcement of the county’s environmental noise standards. The bill authorizes MDE to adopt regulations providing for agreements with qualified counties.

The bill terminates September 30, 2009.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditure increase of \$5,200 in FY 2007 for MDE to purchase and maintain two meters. Future year estimates are annualized and reflect ongoing operating costs through the bill’s termination date. No effect on revenues.

(in dollars)	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	5,200	1,600	1,600	400	0
Net Effect	(\$5,200)	(\$1,600)	(\$1,600)	(\$400)	\$0

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

Local Effect: According to MDE, most qualified counties have sound level meters of their own. Qualified counties that do not have their own meters would benefit from the use of the meters maintained by MDE. Those counties requesting the use of the meters could incur costs to train staff and to pick up/drop off the meters.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: “Qualified county” means any county that has adopted environmental noise standards, sound level limits, or noise control laws that meet specified statutory requirements.

Current Law: MDE establishes noise standards, sound level limits, and noise control rules and regulations as necessary to protect the public health, the general welfare, and property. MDE must enforce the noise control rules and regulations. To the extent possible, MDE must use the facilities and services of appropriate agencies of political subdivisions in its enforcement. In general, political subdivisions may not establish standards less stringent than MDE’s.

Background: The fiscal 2006 and 2007 budgets did not include any funds for the Noise Control Program in MDE. The rationale behind eliminating funds for this program was that this issue is better handled by local jurisdictions.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures could increase by an estimated \$5,200 in fiscal 2007, which accounts for the bill’s October 1, 2006 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of purchasing two moderate-complexity sound level meters (at \$2,000 each) and having them calibrated. (Although MDE already has two sound level meters, MDE advises that its existing meters are old and difficult to use.) The estimate also includes costs to maintain the meters and to train MDE staff in order to facilitate meter pick-ups and drop-offs. Future year expenditures reflect ongoing operating expenses through the bill’s termination date of September 30, 2009.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of the Environment, Baltimore City, Montgomery County, Prince George’s County, Talbot County, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 26, 2006
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