

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2007 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

House Bill 1137 (Delegate Pena-Melnyk, *et al.*)

Health and Government Operations

Finance

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**Hospitals - Safe Patient Lifting**

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This bill requires each hospital to establish a safe patient lifting committee by December 1, 2007 and a safe patient lifting policy to reduce employee injuries associated with patient lifting by July 1, 2008.

The committee must include equal representation from management and employees and must consider

- patient handling hazard assessment processes;
- enhanced use of mechanical lifting devices;
- specialized lift teams;
- training for patient care personnel;
- incorporating mechanical lifting devices into construction and renovation plans; and
- developing an evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of the policy.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None. The bill would not materially affect State operations or finances.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Background:** Nursing personnel are consistently listed as one of the top 10 occupations for work-related musculoskeletal disorders, with incidence rates of at least 8.8 per 100 in hospital settings and 13.5 per 100 in nursing home settings. While there has been a steady decline in the rates of most occupational injuries since 1992, work-related musculoskeletal disorders in nursing continue to rise.

The most common patient handling approaches in the United States include manual patient lifting, classes in body mechanics, training in safe lifting techniques, and back belts. There is strong evidence, however, that these approaches have not been effective in reducing caregiver injuries. To date, the interventions with the strongest level of evidence at reducing caregiver injuries include • use of patient handling equipment/devices; • patient care ergonomic assessment protocols; • no lift policies; and • patient lift teams.

In 2005, Texas became the first state to require hospitals and nursing homes to implement safe patient handling and movement programs. In 2006, Washington required hospitals to implement safe patient handling programs. Hospitals are eligible for reduced workers' compensation premiums and a tax credit equal to the cost of acquiring mechanical lifting devices up to \$1,000 for each acute care available inpatient bed. Legislation has also been adopted in Hawaii, Ohio, New York, and Rhode Island. Legislation has been introduced but not enacted in California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Jersey.

According to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, both of the State's chronic hospitals have effective patient lifting programs in place.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** SB 879 (Senator Pinsky) – Finance.

**Information Source(s):** “Evidence-Based Practices for Safe Patient Handling and Movement,” A. Nelson and A. Baptiste, *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, September 30, 2004; “Safe Patient Lifting Legislation Makes Progress,” *Ergonomics Today*, October 9, 2006; Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Department of Legislative Services

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