

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 217 (Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee)
(By Request – Departmental – Health and Mental Hygiene)
Health and Government Operations Finance

Vital Records - Copies to County Registrars of Vital Records

This departmental bill makes adjustments related to the handling of birth, death, and fetal death certificates. The bill requires the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene to provide a copy of an original birth certificate to the registrar for the county where the birth took place. In addition, the bill requires the Secretary to provide a copy of a birth, death, or fetal death certificate to the county registrar where the subject of the certificate resides or resided. Finally, the bill allows certificate copies to be used by county health departments to carry out public health functions.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's changes could be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None; however, local health departments could have access to more certificate data for public health purposes.

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

Analysis

Current Law: The Secretary is charged with collecting, indexing, and safeguarding from fire, loss, or damage each certificate of birth, death, and fetal death.

After registration of a completed death or fetal death certificate, the Secretary sends a copy of the original certificate to the county registrar for the county where the event occurred. The copy can be photographic or electronic or made other ways as prescribed by the Secretary.

Background: Prior to the enactment of Chapter 654 in 1998, statute required all birth, death, or fetal death certificates to be sent to the county registrar for the county where the event occurred. However, Chapter 654 removed the requirement for DHMH to send copies of birth certificates to county registrars. At the time, it was thought that sending the birth certificates would no longer be necessary because of a newly available electronic birth certificate records system which made birth certificates available electronically. However, the bill effectively removed the authority of DHMH to provide birth certificates to local health departments.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Montgomery County, Charles County, Baltimore County, Frederick County, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 4, 2008
mll/ljm

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