

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1077
Ways and Means

(Delegate Malone)

Higher Education - Dual Enrollment Grant Program - Homeschooled Students

This bill expands eligibility for the Dual Enrollment Grant Program to Maryland students who are dually enrolled in home school settings and institutions of higher education in the State. To qualify for a dual enrollment grant, a home-schooled student must receive regular, thorough instruction during the school year in the studies usually taught in the public secondary schools to students of the same age.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2008.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Expanding eligibility for the Dual Enrollment Grant Program would not require additional spending. However, if grant funds are made available for all eligible dually enrolled students, general fund expenditures for the program would increase by an estimated \$364 for each qualifying home-schooled applicant. The proposed FY 2009 State budget includes no funding for the Dual Enrollment Grant Program. Revenues would not be affected.

Local Effect: Dual Enrollment Grant Program funds distributed to community colleges to award to dually enrolled students could be reallocated slightly among the colleges.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: A student who is dually enrolled in a secondary school and an institution of higher education is eligible for a dual enrollment grant. Dual Enrollment Grant

Program funds must be allocated to institutions of higher education based on the number of dually enrolled students at each institution, and institutions that receive program funds must submit annual audits of the use of the funds. The program is scheduled to sunset June 30, 2009. Scholarship funds retained by the Maryland Higher Education Commission at the end of a fiscal year may be used for the Dual Enrollment Grant Program.

Instead of attending a public or private school, the parent or guardian of a school-age child may apply to participate in a program of home schooling that provides regular, thorough instruction in the studies usually taught to children of the same age. The instruction must be monitored by the local school system or a qualifying nonpublic school.

Background: Chapters 296 and 297 of 2007 established a Dual Enrollment Grant Program that is in its first year in fiscal 2008. To support the new program, MHEC is using \$120,211 in funds that it carried forward from other scholarship programs in fiscal 2007. Funds have been allocated to seven community colleges around the State to make awards to 330 dually enrolled students, approximately 10% of the estimated number of eligible students. The proposed fiscal 2009 State budget includes no funding for the Dual Enrollment Grant Program.

The Maryland State Department of Education reports that there were 15,226 families and 24,329 students in Maryland involved in home instruction in the 2005-2006 school year. The number of home-schooled students is equivalent to less than 3% of the public school enrollment.

State Expenditures: Funding for the Dual Enrollment Grant Program is determined by the annual State budget; therefore, expanding eligibility for the program would not necessarily result in additional spending. Furthermore, funding for dual enrollment grants is allocated to institutions of higher education in accordance with the number of eligible students at the institutions. Expanding eligibility could result in a redistribution of available program funding among the institutions but, again, would not require additional State expenditures.

The proposed fiscal 2009 State budget includes no funding for dual enrollment grants, although MHEC could devote some of the funds it carries forward from other student financial assistance programs to the Dual Enrollment Grant Program. MHEC currently estimates that it would need approximately \$1.3 million to be able to make awards to all eligible applicants in the current fiscal year. Assuming this amount is relatively stable, more funding would be needed in future years to make awards to any additional eligible applicants. In fiscal 2008, the average award amount for the program is approximately \$364.

Local Fiscal Effect: MHEC conducted a survey to estimate the number of dually enrolled students in the State and concluded that approximately 97% of these students attend community colleges. Student grants provided under the Dual Enrollment Grant Program are allocated directly to institutions of higher education to distribute to eligible students. Although the bill would not necessarily result in additional funds for the grant program, it could result in a slight reallocation of program funds among the community colleges.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Independent College and University Association, Maryland Higher Education Commission, Department of Legislative Services

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mcp/rhh

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