

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 498 (Senator Kramer, *et al.*)
Judicial Proceedings

Missing Senior Adult Alert Program - Establishment

This bill requires the Department of State Police to develop policies and procedures for the creation of an alert program to assist in locating a “missing senior adult.” The bill specifies that it may not be construed to require a local law enforcement agency or the media to establish or participate in a program to locate a missing senior adult.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill’s requirements would be handled with the existing budgeted resources of the State Police.

Local Effect: None. It is assumed that program participation by local law enforcement units would occur within existing budgeted resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The State Police must • inform local law enforcement agencies of the policies and procedures to be used in handling a report of a missing senior adult; • assist in determining the geographic scope of a particular alert; • establish procedures and standards by which a local law enforcement agency must verify that such an individual is missing and report that information to the State Police; and • provide assistance to a local law enforcement agency, as necessary, to assist in the safe recovery of the missing senior adult. A person filing a report of a missing senior adult must immediately notify the

State Police and the appropriate local law enforcement agency if the person has been located and it is unlikely that the law enforcement agency or State Police know it.

Current Law and Background: The AMBER Alert Plan in Maryland is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement agencies and broadcasters to activate an urgent bulletin in the most serious child abduction cases. Broadcasters use the Emergency Alert System, formerly called the Emergency Broadcast System, to air a description of the abducted child and suspected abductor. This is the same concept used during severe weather emergencies. AMBER Alert information is coordinated by the Maryland State Police.

The alerts rely on the use of highway message boards as well as television and radio stations to broadcast the messages. They are issued when police believe that a child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death and have descriptive information about the child and suspect.

According to Maryland's AMBER Alert Plan, when the abduction of a child age 14 or under (or 15-17 with extenuating circumstances) occurs, police officers responding to the call will contact a State Police duty officer trained to handle such cases. After verifying the abduction meets the AMBER Alert criteria, the State Police activate the Emergency Alert System, notifying radio, television and cable outlets, the Maryland Department of Transportation, and surrounding states.

Chapter 528 of 2004 established a Task Force on Missing Vulnerable Adults to, in part, investigate integration with the Maryland AMBER Alert Plan and the broadcast media in locating missing vulnerable adults. In its final report, issued October 1, 2005, the task force did not recommend integration with the Maryland AMBER Alert Plan due to Federal Communications Commission requirements and protocol.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1218 (Delegate Kramer, *et al.*) – Judiciary.

Information Source(s): Department of State Police, Allegany County, Talbot County, Baltimore City, Department of Legislative Services

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mll/jr

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