

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2009 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 414 (Senator King, *et al.*)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Family Law - Maryland Quality Ratings and Improvement System for Child
Care Programs**

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to establish the Maryland Quality Ratings and Improvement System (QRIS) for all licensed child care centers and registered family day care providers by July 1, 2011. MSDE may adopt regulations to implement these requirements. MSDE must submit an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the progress of QRIS by January 1.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2009.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's requirements can be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: MSDE must establish QRIS for all licensed child care centers and registered family day care providers by July 1, 2011. MSDE must determine five levels of quality for QRIS. At a minimum, QRIS must include an evaluation of the following components:

- licensing status and compliance;
- learning environments;
- program evaluations;
- administrative policies and procedures;
- professional development;
- parent and family involvement; and
- assessment of child growth and learning.

The bill specifies that the purpose of QRIS is to promote school readiness by establishing a system to improve the quality of all licensed and registered child care providers in the State. MSDE must use existing State and federal resources to establish a pilot program and to implement a statewide expansion of QRIS. Funds that are used for the implementation of QRIS may be used to:

- improve the compliance rates of child care facilities;
- establish a methodology to evaluate quality learning environments;
- expand the number of child care programs obtaining State or national program accreditation;
- expand the number of child care providers receiving quality professional development, including postsecondary and continuing education; and
- evaluate the effectiveness, including validity and reliability, of QRIS.

MSDE must select an independent party to evaluate the validity and reliability of QRIS and provide information to the public on the evaluation and rating of all licensed and registered child care programs within QRIS. In addition, MSDE must reduce the number of unannounced monitoring visits from one visit annually to one visit every two years to any establishment that has reached, at a minimum, level three of the five-level QRIS.

Current Law: MSDE has oversight of all licensed and registered child care programs in the State. MSDE is required to adopt regulations that relate to the registration of family day care homes and for the licensing and operation of child care centers.

Background: The bill's preamble indicates that 17 states have established QRIS to identify the level or quality among licensed and registered child care providers. The preamble also references research confirming that the most rapid brain growth occurs in the first five years of life and a recognition that high-quality early care and education programs make a significant contribution to the development of skills required by young children to succeed in schools.

State Fiscal Effect: The bill specifies that existing State and federal resources are to be used to establish and implement QRIS. MSDE advises they will use existing federal child care development funds to award a contract for QRIS. The contractor will be

responsible for receiving, processing, and awarding the quality ratings to child care facilities statewide. These funds currently support many of the quality initiatives that will be part of QRIS, such as licensing/registration and program assessment.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 685 (Delegate Kaiser, *et al.*) (Joint Committee on Children, Youth, and Families) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Department of Human Resources, Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

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