

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2009 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

Senate Bill 315 (Senator Mooney)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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**Task Force on the Correlation Between Population Size of Middle and High Schools and Academic Achievement**

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This bill establishes a Task Force on the Correlation Between Population Size of Middle and High Schools and Academic Achievement to identify and make recommendations on the optimum student population for Maryland middle and high schools. A final report with findings and recommendations is due from the task force by December 1, 2010. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must provide staff support for the task force.

The bill takes effect October 1, 2009 and terminates September 30, 2011.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures in MSDE increase by an estimated \$48,100 in FY 2010 for contractual staff to support the task force and conduct the required studies. FY 2011 reflects inflation and a regular salary increase for the first half of the fiscal year. This estimate assumes that contractual support can be eliminated with completion of the reporting requirement. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	48,100	30,300	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$48,100)	(\$30,300)	\$0	\$0	\$0

*Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect*

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Bill Summary:** The task force is charged with:

- conducting a study of the student population size of Maryland's middle and high schools;
- conducting a study of contemporary research on the correlation between the student population size of middle and high schools and the academic achievement of students; and
- identifying and making recommendations on the optimum student population for Maryland middle and high schools.

Members of the task force may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations.

**Current Law:** Local boards of education establish public schools to meet the needs of the community. Student enrollment at each public school is determined at the local level.

**Background:** According to a report by the Education Commission of the States, students from smaller schools have better attendance rates, complete more courses, achieve higher grades, and have better test scores. Smaller schools also have lower dropout rates and fewer discipline problems. However, there is no agreement about what constitutes a small school or what school size is ideal. Academic research on school size has found that:

- smaller schools produce higher student achievement, particularly among underprivileged students;
- smaller schools typically have higher per-student costs; however, they are more cost effective because they generally produce higher-than-average graduation rates;
- smaller schools appear to promote greater levels of parent participation and satisfaction, and increase communication between parents and teachers;
- smaller schools tend to have fewer incidents of violence and vandalism; and
- teachers in smaller schools are more likely to say struggling students are identified and receive help.

**State Expenditures:** General fund expenditures increase by an estimated \$48,100 in fiscal 2010 and an estimated \$30,258 in fiscal 2011. The estimate reflects the cost of hiring a contractual research specialist from October 2009 through December 2010 to

support the task force and complete the required studies. The estimates include a full-time salary for 15 months, fringe benefits, and operating costs.

	<b><u>FY 2010</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2011</u></b>
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$46,249	\$30,000
Start-up and Operating Expenses	<u>1,853</u>	<u>258</u>
<b>Total State Expenditures</b>	<b>\$48,102</b>	<b>\$30,258</b>

MSDE advises that similar studies with no data collection required cost an estimated \$3.2 to \$4.5 million over four to five years. For the studies required by the bill, the data is not readily available and would have to be generated at an additional cost. MSDE estimates contractual services for the required task force studies at \$500,000 per fiscal year, plus a contractual research specialist. DLS advises that, using results from published reports and readily available State data, the required studies can be completed by a contractual research specialist.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** HB 274 (Delegates Schuh and Kaiser) - Ways and Means.

**Information Source(s):** Education Commission of the States, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 15, 2009  
ncs/mwc

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