

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2009 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 248

(Delegate Niemann, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Task Force to Study Strategies to Reduce Solid Waste

This bill establishes a Task Force to Study Strategies to Reduce Solid Waste. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) must provide staff support for the task force. The task force must submit an interim report by December 31, 2009, and final report by December 1, 2010, providing findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2009, and terminates May 31, 2011.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Given the State's fiscal difficulties, agency budgets have been constrained. Thus, the requirement to staff the task force is not absorbable within the existing budgeted resources of MDE. Instead, special and/or general fund expenditures may increase in FY 2010 and 2011 for staff to support the task force. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The task force is required to:

- examine specified solid waste management processes;

- identify the components of a comprehensive, cost effective, statewide waste stream reduction plan and identify specific suitable goals for reducing the State's various waste streams;
- identify components for a strategic plan that will transition the State away from environmentally harmful ways of disposing of waste and toward ways that minimize the size of the waste stream and its economic and environmental costs;
- determine the financial and operational components that must be part of State and local waste stream reduction strategies;
- examine how the costs associated with the waste stream may be allocated to those responsible for creating the wastes involved, including "pay as you throw" charging and variable waste disposal fees; and
- examine how the costs associated with the waste stream may be reduced or mitigated through new markets focusing on the recycling and reuse of materials.

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

Current Law: In 1988, the Maryland Recycling Act (MRA) required each county to submit a recycling plan. Jurisdictions with over 150,000 residents were required to reduce their solid waste by 20%, and jurisdictions with less than 150,000 residents were required to reduce their solid waste by 15%. Legislation enacted in 2000 established a voluntary statewide diversion goal of 40% by 2005. Counties have the flexibility to determine the best way to reach the required recycling rates.

Background: In 2007, the municipal solid waste stream totaled just over 6.9 million tons statewide. Maryland achieved a statewide waste diversion rate of 47.5% in calendar year 2007 – exceeding the requirements of MRA and the statewide waste diversion goal of 40%. The calendar year 2007 waste diversion rate reflects a 44.1% MRA recycling rate and source reduction efforts by counties and Baltimore City to reduce waste.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 509 of 2008 received an unfavorable report by the House Environmental Matters Committee.

Cross File: SB 530 (Senator Harrington) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of the Environment, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 9, 2009
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