

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2009 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1539 (Delegate Rudolph)
Health and Government Operations

Task Force to Study Merging the Cecil County Health Department, Social Services Department, and Senior Services & Community Transit Department

This bill establishes a Task Force to Study Merging the Cecil County Health Department, Social Services Department, and Senior Services and Community Transit Department. The task force must study the benefits of merging the three departments and make recommendations to the Cecil County Commissioners on whether to merge the departments. The Cecil County Commissioners must provide staff support to the task force. A preliminary report is due by January 15, 2010 and a final report is due to the county commissioners by July 1, 2010. Copies of the final report must be sent to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Department of Human Resources, and the Maryland Department of Aging.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2009, and terminates July 1, 2010.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Cecil County can handle the bill's requirements with existing budgeted resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: While considering the benefits of merging the departments, the task force must study:

- the impact on services provided;
- potential organizational structures;
- employee and staffing needs;
- the impact on State agency partnerships; and
- the impact on State and Cecil County funding.

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

Current Law/Background: The Community Health Administration within the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene oversees the local health departments in each county and Baltimore City. Under the direction of a local health officer, each local health department provides services and administers and enforces State and local health laws and regulations in its jurisdiction. The local health officer is appointed jointly by the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene and the local governing body.

The Cecil County Health Department offers a variety of health services including: substance abuse recovery services; nutrition counseling, home visits for pregnant and post partum women and their children, and case management for children with special health care needs; enforcement of environmental health regulations; health education and outreach programs; epidemiological public health and emergency planning and support; mental health services; and monitoring and controlling of communicable diseases.

The partnership between the Maryland Department of Aging (MDoA) and the 19 local Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) provides programs and services for seniors statewide. AAAs are local government or nonprofit organizations designated by MDoA under federal statutory authority to provide for a range of services to meet the needs of older Marylanders. Each AAA is required to submit a plan for the delivery of services. Approval from MDoA is based on AAAs having met State and federal statutory and regulatory requirements. State and federal funds are allocated to AAAs based on formulas developed by MDoA in cooperation with AAAs. AAAs receive additional funds through county and municipal support and other public and private contributions. AAAs provide services to seniors either directly or through contracts with other public or private organizations.

The Senior Services and Community Transit Department is the AAA in Cecil County. The department offers various services to seniors through its two centers, including activities, trips, fitness opportunities, and educational programs. The department also, in partnership with the Maryland Transit Administration, promotes accessible transit for county residents of all ages.

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) provides essential support services and staff to operate the 24 local departments of social services (including Cecil County's). In cooperation with DHR, and often with community partners, local social services departments provide a variety of services, including:

- employment related activities and support;
- promotion of economic self-sufficiency and family stability;
- child welfare social service programs;
- child support enforcement; and
- protection against abuse and neglect for children and adults.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Cecil County, Maryland Department of Aging, Department of Human Resources, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 24, 2009
mcp/mwc

Analysis by: Scott P. Gates

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510