

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 181

(Delegate Hubbard, *et al.*)

Health and Government Operations

Finance

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene - Biomonitoring Program - Report

This bill requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), in consultation with the Maryland Department of the Environment, to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of establishing a biomonitoring program in the State to monitor the presence and concentration of chemicals in Maryland residents. The bill establishes requirements for the study and requires DHMH to report its findings to specified legislative committees by June 30, 2011.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2010, and terminates June 30, 2011.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The affected departments can handle the required study and report with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Background: Biomonitoring began in 1976 when the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began measuring lead levels in children's blood and found that nearly 9 out of 10 children had high levels of lead in their bloodstreams. Through biomonitoring, researchers determined that leaded gas was the primary cause of the high lead levels in children. This information assisted the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with eliminating lead in gasoline.

Biological monitoring, or biomonitoring, measures the levels of environmental chemicals directly in people's blood, urine, or other body tissues. CDC identifies biomonitoring as the standard for assessing society's exposure to toxic substances. Additionally, biomonitoring improves health officials' abilities to make informed decisions on human exposure to chemicals. CDC collects annual data on human exposure to 212 chemicals, including pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls, mercury, and second-hand smoke. The current survey design does not permit CDC to estimate exposure to environmental chemicals on a state-by-state basis, however.

Environmental factors have been linked to numerous diseases such as asthma, leukemia, learning disabilities, cancer, and developmental disabilities. Seventeen percent of U.S. children have developmental disabilities such as mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy, and attention deficit disorder. Although the cause of most developmental disorders is unknown, research suggests that chemicals in the environment, such as mercury and lead, can cause such disorders in children.

In 2009 CDC awarded a total of \$5 million to three states (California, New York, and Washington) for state-based biomonitoring programs. CDC has not been able to fund all states that wish to pursue biomonitoring programs.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Conference of State Legislatures, Maryland Department of the Environment, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

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ncs/mwc

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