

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 797

(Senator Jones)

Finance

Health and Government Operations

Blue Ribbon Commission on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders

This bill establishes a Blue Ribbon Commission to examine population data on Alzheimer's disease and related disorders; survey current research on the disease and related disorders; assess existing services, resources, and capacity for the State's Alzheimer's disease and related disorders population; and make recommendations concerning the steps the State should take in dealing with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. The commission is required to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by September 30, 2012. The commission is co-chaired by the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Secretary of Aging, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) must provide staff for the coordination of the commission's activities and related public and private research support. A member of the commission is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under State travel regulations.

The bill terminates September 30, 2012.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Given the State's fiscal difficulties, agency budgets have been constrained. Thus, the requirement to provide staff for the coordination of the commission's activities and related public and private research support is not absorbable within the existing budgeted resources of DHMH. Instead, general fund expenditures increase minimally in FY 2011, 2012, and 2013 for contractual staff to provide research support. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: A number of programs, task forces, and councils address specific diseases and conditions. Some examples include the Asthma Control Program, the Kidney Disease Program, and the State Advisory Council on Hereditary and Congenital Disorders.

Background: Dementia is a general term for memory loss caused by physical changes in the brain. Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia, accounting for 60% to 80% of cases. However, diseases causing memory loss are numerous and are typically difficult to diagnose. Some diseases selectively damage short-term memory, while others impair both short-term memory and remote memory. In addition, strokes and other diseases may impair memory-related functions.

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive and fatal brain disease for which there is no known cure. An estimated 5.3 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's, which destroys brain cells and causes memory problems. It is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States.

Age is the most important known risk factor in individuals with Alzheimer's disease. It affects 13% of Americans who are age 65. In addition, the number of individuals with Alzheimer's doubles every five years beyond age 65. As baby boomers age, it is estimated the incidence of Alzheimer's will reach 7.7 million by 2030, creating a significant impact on the American health care system. Alzheimer's and dementia are responsible for tripling health care costs for Americans age 65 and older.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, at least 18 states have established task forces to identify problems and develop a plan for dealing with Alzheimer's disease.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Alzheimer's Association, National Conference of State Legislatures, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Erin McMullen

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