

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 79 (Chair, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
 Committee)(By Request - Departmental - Deaf and Hard
 of Hearing, Office of the)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Health and Government Operations

Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - Responsibilities

This departmental bill expands the responsibilities of the Governor’s Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) to include individuals who are deaf-blind. The bill adds two members to the Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Aging, and an individual with knowledge or expertise relating to the deaf-blind. Responsibilities related to safety and emergency services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals are also modified.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$1,000 in FY 2011 for interpretative services. Future year expenditures reflect inflation. ODHH advises that the additional costs can be handled with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	1,000	1,000	1,100	1,100	1,100
Net Effect	(\$1,000)	(\$1,000)	(\$1,100)	(\$1,100)	(\$1,100)

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: ODHH has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). Legislative Services concurs with this assessment.

Analysis

Current Law: ODHH was established in 2001 to promote the general welfare of the deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the State. The office provides, advocates, and coordinates the adoption of public policies, regulations, and programs that assist the deaf and hard of hearing. The Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing currently consists of 16 members.

The office is responsible for working with State and local agencies to ensure individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing have access to safety and emergency services, including the acquisition and distribution of visual smoke detectors.

Background: Deaf-blindness is a condition in which the combination of hearing and visual losses causes difficulties in communicating, especially in children. Special education programs solely for children who are deaf or children who are blind have trouble accommodating individuals who are deaf-blind. Many individuals who are deaf-blind have some usable vision and/or hearing, therefore the range in sensory impairments within the term deaf-blind is vast. Due to the range of sensory impairments within the deaf-blind definition, it is difficult to estimate how many individuals are classified as deaf-blind. According to the American Association of the Deaf-Blind, approximately 1.2 million Americans having varying degrees of hearing and vision loss.

While not required by law, ODHH currently serves the deaf-blind community of Maryland. This has occurred because interventions used in the deaf and hard of hearing community parallel those for the deaf-blind community.

ODHH wishes to increase the number of State agencies represented on the advisory council to account for the aging population in Maryland. In 2008, approximately 29% of Americans were 45 to 59 years of age. As this demographic group ages, an increased number of them will experience hearing loss. Overall, approximately 30% of individuals 65 to 74 years of age and 47% of individuals 75 and older experience hearing loss.

Although ODHH is required to acquire and distribute visual smoke alarms for individuals with hearing loss, the office has discontinued processing applications and has begun using local fire departments to process applications. ODHH never received State funds nor raised funds necessary to purchase and distribute visual smoke alarms and considers this responsibility duplicative of efforts currently undertaken by local fire departments.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by \$1,025 in fiscal 2011 as a result of the bill's requirement for an individual with deaf-blind expertise to sit on the advisory council. This assumes that two interpreters are required to provide tactile sign/close vision interpretation for the new individual on the advisory council who is

deaf-blind. The advisory council meets four times annually and each meeting is scheduled for three hours. Future year expenditures reflect inflation. ODHH advises that the bill's requirements can be handled with existing budgeted resources. The annual budget for the office includes approximately \$20,000 to cover interpreting costs.

The change in responsibilities related to visual smoke alarms does not directly affect governmental finances.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1478 of 2009 was withdrawn.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Helen Keller National Center, National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 12, 2010
mpc/hlb

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ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESSES

TITLE OF BILL: Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing -
Responsibilities

BILL NUMBER: SB 79

PREPARED BY: Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - Responsibilities

PART A. ECONOMIC IMPACT RATING

This agency estimates that the proposed bill:

WILL HAVE MINIMAL OR NO ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL
BUSINESS

OR

WILL HAVE MEANINGFUL ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL
BUSINESSES

PART B. ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

The proposed legislation will have no impact on small business in Maryland.