

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 611

(Senator Benson, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Health and Government Operations

Health - Pregnant Women - Hepatitis B Testing

This bill requires an individual attending a woman for pregnancy to submit to a medical laboratory a blood sample taken from the woman (1) when the individual first examines the woman; and (2) if the woman did not have prenatal services or there is no documentation of the woman's hepatitis B status, at the time of delivery. The bill specifies that the laboratory receiving the blood sample must perform a standard hepatitis B test that is approved by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH).

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Because DHMH advises that the testing required under the bill is already a recommended standard of care (and is already covered by Medicaid), the bill is not expected to materially affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Background: "Hepatitis" means inflammation of the liver and also refers to a group of viral infections, including the hepatitis B virus (HBV), that affect the liver. HBV can be either acute (*i.e.*, a short-term illness occurring within six months of exposure) or chronic (*i.e.*, a serious disease that can result in long-term health problems and/or death). In many cases, an acute infection leads to a chronic infection. According to the

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), viral hepatitis is the leading cause of liver cancer and the most common reason for liver transplantation.

HBV can be transmitted by sharing needles, syringes, or other drug injection equipment with an infected person; through sexual contact with an infected person; or from an infected mother to her child at birth. According to CDC, there were an estimated 38,000 new HBV infections in the United States in 2009 (down from 287,000 in 1987). HBV vaccination is recommended as the best way to prevent the virus.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1084 (Delegate B. Robinson, *et al.*) - Health and Government Operations.

Information Source(s): Office of the Attorney General, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland Insurance Administration, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Legislative Services

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