

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1252
Ways and Means

(Delegate Hucker, *et al.*)

Education - Dyslexia Testing and Services for Dyslexic Students - Pilot Program

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop a pilot program for dyslexia and related disorder testing. Each local school board may participate in the pilot program. The bill requires MSDE to make recommendations to participating local school boards as to the appropriate testing method and the appropriate services to provide a student who is identified as being dyslexic or as having a related disorder. Participating local school boards must, under certain conditions, provide testing of students for dyslexia and related disorders and provide specified remedial education to a student identified as having dyslexia or a related disorder. MSDE must annually report to the Maryland General Assembly on the number of counties participating in the program and the impact of the pilot program on student learning.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase minimally for MSDE to develop the program, assess the impact of the pilot program, and report annually on the program. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Participation in the pilot program is voluntary; local school board expenditures are not directly affected. However, for local school boards that choose to participate in the program, expenditures on tests for dyslexia and related disorders may increase to the extent these tests will occur more frequently. Expenditures of participating local school boards may increase or decrease, depending upon the affect on educational services provided for some students with dyslexia or a related disorder.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill defines dyslexia as a language processing disorder that may be manifested by difficulty processing language, including difficulty with the alphabet, reading comprehension, writing, or spelling despite an individual's adequate intelligence, educational exposure, and cultural opportunity.

At the request of a parent, student, or school personnel who has reason to believe that a student should be tested for dyslexia and related disorders, a local school board participating in the program must test the student. The test may not be conducted without parental approval. If the test substantiates the concern that the student has dyslexia or a related disorder, the local school board must provide pertinent educational remediation in an appropriate multisensory, systematic language-based education program.

Current Law: The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that a student with disabilities be provided a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, in accordance with the Individualized Education Program (IEP) specific to the individual needs of the student. The State and local school systems must implement IDEA consistent with requirements regarding the location, identification, evaluation, provision of special education and related services, and the provision of a free appropriate public education to children with disabilities. This includes adherence to specified timelines intended to avoid delay of services to a child identified as a child with a disability in need of special education and related services.

Background: Dyslexia is characterized by an unexpected difficulty in reading in individuals who otherwise possess the intelligence and motivation needed for accurate and fluent reading. One often cited source indicates that the prevalence of dyslexia among school-age children in the United States is estimated to range from 5% to 17%.

State Fiscal Effect: MSDE can make the required recommendations using existing resources. General fund expenditures may increase minimally for MSDE to develop the program and to report annually on the impact of the pilot program. The additional expenditures will depend in part on the number of local school boards that choose to participate in the program.

Local Fiscal Effect: Because local school board participation in the pilot program is voluntary, local expenditures are not directly affected by the bill.

Local school boards that choose to participate will likely have staff with expertise regarding identification and evaluation of a child that may have dyslexia and appropriate remedial education, given that dyslexia is a common disorder, and given that IDEA requires local school systems to provide a free and appropriate education to children with

disabilities. However, local expenditures may increase for participating local school boards to the extent that the number of tests for dyslexia and related disorders increases as a result of participation in the program. Expenditures for a participating local school board may also be affected if the bill requires a type of remedial education that would not otherwise be planned or implemented for some children with dyslexia or related disorders. The prescribed remediation may be more or less expensive than the treatment currently used.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Society of Biological Psychiatry, Department of Legislative Services

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mlm/mwc

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