

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Joint Resolution 11 (Delegate Carr, *et al.*)
Rules and Executive Nominations

Commemoration of World Autism Awareness Day

This joint resolution requires that to commemorate April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day that the lights on the State House must be colored blue to participate in the “Light It Up Blue” initiative.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: While the Department of General Services can comply with the joint resolution with existing resources, the State House Trust adopted a policy in 2011 not to alter the lighting on the State House dome for any private, commercial, or nonprofit entity, in accordance with the standards for an historical landmark.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Background: Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that typically manifests itself during the first three years of life and results from a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain. Autism and autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) are characterized by impairments in social interaction, problems with verbal and nonverbal communication, repetitive behavior, and restricted interests and activities.

ASDs affect individuals irrespective of gender, race, or socio-economic status; however, ASDs are almost five times more common among boys than among girls. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that about 1 in 88 children has been

identified with an ASD. It is the fastest-growing serious developmental disability in the United States and its prevalence continues to grow.

More people than ever before are being diagnosed with an ASD. It is unclear exactly how much of this increase is due to a broader definition of ASDs and better efforts in diagnosis. However, a true increase in the number of people with an ASD cannot be ruled out. Researchers at CDC believe the increase in ASD diagnosis is likely due to a combination of these factors.

World Autism Awareness Day

On December 18, 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 62/139 which declares April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day. This is one of only four health specific days declared by the United Nations.

Autism Speaks is the world's leading autism science and advocacy organization and each April 2 Autism Speaks celebrates "Light It Up Blue" to raise awareness of the growing public health concern that is autism. "Light It Up Blue" is a global initiative that kicks off Autism Awareness Month and helps raise awareness about autism and many iconic landmarks, hotels, sporting venues, concert halls, museums, bridges, and retail stores are lit up blue for the event.

State House Dome

The Department of General Services completed a project to upgrade the lighting of the State House dome in 2013 as part of the dome restoration project. The new LED lights use a quarter of the electricity of the prior mercury vapor lights and now the color of the lights can be changed automatically as opposed to the prior labor-intensive procedure which required maintenance staff to place colored panels over the lights. However, the State House Trust adopted a policy in 2011 not to alter the lighting on the State House dome for any private, commercial, or nonprofit entity, in accordance with the standards for an historical landmark.

The State House Trust was created in 1969 to oversee the area inside State Circle in Annapolis, including the State House. This oversight extends to the use of buildings and grounds and any exhibits on display there. The trust supervises all improvements, alterations, additions, landscaping, and repairs within that area.

The State House Trust consists of four *ex officio* members, or their designees, who serve as trustees. Members of the trust may appoint from one to three nonvoting associate members who are qualified by experience and interest in historical preservation. The trust retains an architect as a consultant. The voting members of the trust include, the

Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the Director of the Maryland Historic Trust, and the State Archivist.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of General Services, Autism Speaks, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Legislative Services

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ncs/hlb

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