

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 795
 Judiciary

(Delegate Waldstreicher, *et al.*)

Task Force on the Fiscal Impact Associated With Animal Cruelty Cases

This bill creates a task force to (1) collect and review data on animal cruelty cases and the associated fiscal impact on animal shelters or animal control agencies; (2) review laws providing restitution for animal shelters and animal control agencies caring for animals seized in cruelty cases; and (3) make recommendations regarding a means of providing such restitution. The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) must provide staff for the task force.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2014, and terminates July 31, 2015.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$27,000 in FY 2015 for a consultant to assist the task force and for reimbursement of task force member expenses. General fund expenditures may also increase minimally in FY 2014 and/or 2015 for overtime of existing administrative staff. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	-	27,000	0	0	0
Net Effect	\$0	(\$27,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill creates a Task Force on the Fiscal Impact Associated with Animal Cruelty Cases staffed by MDA. The task force must:

- collect and review data on animal cruelty cases and the fiscal impact on animal shelters or animal control agencies caring for animals seized in animal cruelty cases;
- review laws providing restitution for animal shelters and animal control agencies caring for animals seized in cruelty cases within Maryland and in other states to identify best practices and any existing problems; and
- make recommendations regarding a means of providing restitution for animal shelters and animal control agencies caring for animals seized in cruelty cases.

The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2014. Task force members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses.

Current Law: Criminal penalties apply to violations of State law relating to animal cruelty, and if an owner or custodian of an animal is convicted of an act of animal cruelty, the court may order the removal of the animal or any other animal at the time of conviction for the protection of the animal. In addition, an officer or authorized agent of a humane society, or a police officer or other public official required to protect animals, may seize an animal if necessary to protect the animal from cruelty. The penalties specified in statute for animal cruelty include fines; imprisonment; participation in and payment for psychological counseling; and prohibition from owning, possessing, or residing with an animal.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by \$27,000 in fiscal 2015. This estimate reflects the cost for MDA to hire a qualified consultant to assist the task force (\$25,000) and reimbursement of expenses of task force members (\$2,000). MDA indicates that it does not have the expertise or capacity needed to efficiently and effectively compile the relevant information for the task force. The consultant would compile the information and prepare the task force's report. General fund expenditures may also increase minimally in fiscal 2014 and/or 2015 to the extent that existing MDA administrative staff incur overtime to handle logistical and communications work associated with the task force.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Agriculture; Carroll, Cecil, Harford, Montgomery, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's counties; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 18, 2014
mam/lgc

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