

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 83

(Senator Simonaire)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environment and Transportation

Environment - Vibrio Public Information Campaign

This emergency bill requires the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), in consultation with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), and other interested State, local, and private stakeholders, to develop and implement an appropriate public information campaign about the health risks associated with the *Vibrio* bacteria in the waters of the State. The public information campaign must be developed and implemented by June 15, 2015.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's requirements are expected to be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The *Vibrio* public information campaign must:

- identify that *Vibrio* is a naturally occurring bacteria that is a rare waterborne cause of illness nationwide;
- target the geographical areas and times of the year that the *Vibrio* bacteria is most active;
- warn of the dangers of contracting a *Vibrio* infection and that certain pre-existing health conditions may increase the risk posed by *Vibrio*;

- emphasize preventative measures, identify symptoms to facilitate early detection, and encourage individuals with symptoms to seek immediate medical attention;
- implement processes to ensure that the medical community in the State is properly notified of the risks and symptoms of a *Vibrio* infection and is properly prepared for the treatment of a *Vibrio* infection; and
- provide a link to the MDE website where additional information about *Vibrio* infections is available.

Current Law/Background: *Vibrio* bacteria occur naturally in estuarine or marine environments, including the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, and *Vibrio* infections usually result from exposure to water or consumption of raw or undercooked seafood containing the bacteria. A fact sheet issued by DHMH, MDE, and DNR, regarding skin wounds and water contact, states that *Vibrio* infections are rare, but when *Vibrio* comes in contact with an open wound, it can cause serious infections and can be particularly dangerous for people with weakened immune systems.

According to DHMH statistics, there were 57 reported cases of *Vibriosis* (a type of infection resulting from *Vibrio* bacteria) in Maryland in 2013, which is a high among recent years (since 2005) when the number of reported cases has generally been between 25 and 45, with the exception of 2012, when 53 cases were reported. The 57 reported cases in 2013 represent a rate of 1 reported case per 100,000 people.

DHMH regulations include control measures that a shellfish dealer and a shellfish aquaculture harvester permittee must implement to reduce the occurrence of illness from *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, a type of *Vibrio* bacteria.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland Department of the Environment, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 5, 2015
mar/lgc Revised - Enrolled Bill - May 11, 2015

Analysis by: Scott D. Kennedy

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510