

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 444
Appropriations

(Delegate B. Robinson, *et al.*)

Homeless Expenditures Accountability Act

This bill requires every county and each State, local, and nonprofit agency that receives federal, State, or local funding to remedy and prevent homelessness in the State to report specified information annually to the Interagency Council on Homelessness. The first reports must be filed by December 31, 2015, and contain information for fiscal 2015.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's requirements can be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: Any potential minimal increase in expenditures to prepare the required reports does not materially impact local government finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Each State, local, and nonprofit agency that receives federal, State, or local funding to remedy and prevent homelessness in the State must report the following information annually to the council: (1) the number of shelter beds the agency made available to homeless individuals and the number of vacant beds, if any; (2) the number of homeless individuals served by the agency, including the number of first-time clients; and (3) the total amount of funding received by the agency to provide housing and services to homeless individuals.

Each county must report the following information annually to the council: (1) the number of affordable housing units in the county; (2) the number of affordable housing units added

during the reporting period; (3) the number of housing vouchers issued, including tenant-based and project-based vouchers; and (4) the number of organizations in the county that received local funding to provide direct housing to homeless individuals and the amount of funding distributed to each organization.

Current Law/Background: The Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness was created pursuant to executive order in 2002. The council coordinated State policy regarding the homeless and devised strategies by which State agencies could collaborate to help those without shelter and prevent homelessness in Maryland. Chapter 341 of 2014 created the Interagency Council on Homelessness, which must:

- coordinate State policy and working relationships among State, local, and nonprofit agencies concerning efforts to remedy and prevent homelessness;
- coordinate data sharing between local Continuums of Care (regional or local planning bodies that coordinate housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals);
- coordinate outreach to each Continuum of Care to develop joint strategies that impact State and federal funding efforts to remedy and prevent homelessness;
- determine comprehensive and effective collaborative strategies and best practices for remediation and prevention of homelessness in the State, in particular addressing the differing needs of the State's geographic areas;
- review and analyze the need for and availability of affordable and accessible housing resources to address the needs of homeless individuals throughout the State;
- recommend changes necessary to alleviate or prevent homelessness, including making recommendations to the General Assembly and appropriate State agencies and organizations regarding effective policies, effective distribution of resources, and access to available services and programs;
- identify supportive services for special populations, including veterans, youth, families, and individuals with behavioral health problems;
- disseminate information and educate the public about the prevalence and causes of and responses to homelessness; and
- solicit input from the advocacy community, the business community, the faith community, and consumers regarding policy and program development.

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) provides staff assistance to the council and is required to adopt regulations to govern the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programs to make homelessness rare and, if it occurs, of brief duration.

Prior reports from the Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness indicated that homelessness is a complex social and public health crisis, and that the transient nature of the population poses significant challenges to agencies tracking and quantifying episodes of homelessness.

State Expenditures: DHR advises that it requires one full-time employee to manage the ongoing development and dissemination of the report required under the bill. The Department of Legislative Services disagrees and advises that existing resources within DHR should be sufficient to prepare an annual report required under the bill. While it is anticipated that the council, which is staffed by DHR, may devote additional time to reviewing and analyzing the information submitted in the required reports, the Department of Legislative Services notes that the reported information should *assist* the council in fulfilling its *existing* responsibilities as outlined above; therefore, the bill does not materially impact the operations of the council.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Governor's Office for Children; Department of Budget and Management; Department of Human Resources; Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Housing and Community Development; Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation; Department of Aging; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Veterans Affairs; Maryland Association of Counties; Charles and Montgomery counties; Department of Legislative Services

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