

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 187

(Senator Pugh, *et al.*)

Finance

Health and Government Operations

Workgroup to Study Access to Obstetric Services

This bill authorizes the Maryland Hospital Association (MHA), in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, the health occupations boards, the Governor's Workforce Investment Board (GWIB), and other specified stakeholders as determined appropriate by MHA, to establish a workgroup to study access to obstetric services in Maryland. The workgroup must develop a comprehensive mechanism to evaluate the number and geographic locations of obstetrical health care workers, practice patterns, provider preferences, and other relevant factors. The workgroup must make recommendations for enactment of legislation that would provide incentives to increase the availability of obstetric care services throughout Maryland. By December 1, 2015, the workgroup must submit a report to the Governor and specified committees of the General Assembly.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2015.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Participation on the workgroup may increase expenditures for specified State entities (including the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and GWIB) by a minimal amount and require resources to be redirected from other activities. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: In November 2011, GWIB released a “Healthcare 2020” action plan titled *Preparing Maryland for Health Reform: Healthcare 2020*. The report projected that employment of obstetricians and gynecologists would grow by 13.7% from calendar 2008 to 2018. Estimated calendar 2008 employment of obstetricians and gynecologists was 255. In July 2013, GWIB entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Governor’s Office of Health Care Reform and the Maryland Health Care Commission to implement a statewide comprehensive health care workforce data collection effort.

The 2014 *Joint Chairmen’s Report* requested the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) to convene a group of interested stakeholders, including the providers of obstetrical care from urban and rural areas, to study the issue of access to obstetrical care. The group had to (1) evaluate the factors contributing to any access to obstetrical care in both urban and rural areas of the State; (2) evaluate if this issue exists in other states, and any policies that those states engage in to reduce barriers to obstetrical care in urban and/or rural areas; (3) review recent proposals intended to ensure access to obstetrical care in urban and rural areas, including through the creation of a birth injury fund, and analyze the costs and benefits of these proposals; and (4) make recommendations on ways to address any identified barriers to obstetrical care.

In December 2014, DHMH submitted a response that included, among other information, data on the number and rates of active obstetrician-gynecologists by county and specialty in Maryland and the number and rates of active obstetrician-gynecologists accepting Medicaid patients. The response included the following workgroup recommendations: (1) reduce medical liability risks and associated costs; (2) ask the legislature to consider a no-fault birth injury fund, including the hiring of an actuarial firm to determine the best way to support the costs of a fund; (3) limit any attempt to raise the State’s current cap on noneconomic damages; (4) examine additional tort reforms; (5) develop a better understanding of workforce supply with regard to obstetrics and primary care; (6) adequately fund the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants; and (7) expand telemedicine initiatives.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 3, 2015
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