

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

Senate Bill 614  
Finance

(Senator Nathan-Pulliam, *et al.*)

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Health Care Facilities - Blood Pressure Screening

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This bill requires hypertension screening of each patient receiving health care services from a hospital, limited service hospital, freestanding ambulatory care facility, or facility offering primary or specialty health care services. The screening must consist of at least one of the following tests: (1) office blood pressure measurement; (2) ambulatory blood pressure monitoring; (3) home blood pressure monitoring; or (4) any other blood pressure screening test approved by the Secretary of Health. A health care provider must provide a referral for treatment and support services if hypertension screening results indicate elevated blood pressure.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill is not anticipated to affect State finances or operations.

**Local Effect:** The bill is not anticipated to affect local government finances or operations.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law/Background:** Statute does not require health care facilities to screen patients for hypertension, but the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) advises that blood pressure screening is a standard diagnostic procedure.

According to MDH, in Maryland, heart disease is the leading cause of death among both men and women. Hypertension increases a person's risk of heart disease and stroke. At

least one in three Maryland adults has hypertension, but many do not know they have it as there are usually no warning signs or symptoms.

In addition to generally promoting the importance of blood pressure screenings, MDH has implemented other programs to increase screenings. Due in part to a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more dentists in the State are screening individuals for hypertension. The grant funds a pilot program to encourage dental professionals to screen patients for hypertension at every visit and refer cases of elevated and high blood pressure to medical professionals and community resources for further services. According to MDH, as of July 31, 2018, dentists had screened more than 22,000 individuals for hypertension.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 13, 2019  
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