

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 847

(Delegate Guyton, *et al.*)

Health and Government Operations

Finance

State Coordinator for Autism Strategy and Advisory Stakeholder Group on
 Autism-Related Needs

This bill establishes a State Coordinator for Autism Strategy in the Department of Disabilities (MDOD) to (1) identify and evaluate existing services for individuals with autism and their families; (2) develop a strategic plan for addressing autism-related needs by July 1, 2021; (3) identify national benchmarks and other performance measures; and (4) monitor and evaluate the implementation of the strategic plan and the success of the State in addressing autism-related needs. By July 1, 2021, and each year thereafter, the coordinator must submit a report to the Secretary of Disabilities, the Governor, and the General Assembly on the development, implementation, and effectiveness of the strategic plan. The report must also be posted on the MDOD website. The bill also establishes an Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs and requires the coordinator to be a member of the Maryland Commission on Disabilities (MCOB). **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$86,100 in FY 2021 to hire a State Coordinator for Autism Strategy in MDOD. Future year expenditures reflect annualization and ongoing costs. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	86,100	104,100	106,700	110,300	114,100
Net Effect	(\$86,100)	(\$104,100)	(\$106,700)	(\$110,300)	(\$114,100)

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The strategic plan must specify performance measures for monitoring and evaluating success in addressing autism-related needs in the State, including (1) reducing the unemployment and underemployment rates of people with autism; (2) improving postsecondary transition services and graduation rates; (3) increasing college admission, postsecondary vocational internships, and apprenticeship licensure; (4) increasing the availability of safe, affordable, and accessible housing; (5) identifying and reducing the negative physical and mental health outcomes of people with autism; and (6) evaluating the need for and making recommendations regarding training programs for first responders that address the effective recognition of and response to the needs of individuals with autism and their caregivers.

The Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs comprises the State Superintendent of Schools; the Secretaries of Disabilities, Human Services, and Health; the State Coordinator for Autism Strategy; several members from relevant associations; and additional members appointed by the Governor. MDOD must staff the advisory group, and the State Coordinator for Autism Strategy must chair the advisory group. Members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under standard State travel regulations, as provided in the State budget.

Uncodified language requires the Secretary of Disabilities (or the Secretary's designee) to chair the advisory group until the State Coordinator for Autism Strategy position is filled.

The advisory group must work with the coordinator to (1) identify and evaluate existing services for individuals with autism and their families; (2) develop a strategic plan for addressing autism-related needs in the State; (3) promote, monitor, and evaluate implementation of the strategic plan; and (4) recommend and implement changes to the strategic plan.

Current Law: MDOD coordinates and supports public and private agencies serving Maryland citizens with disabilities, and identifies and recommends ways to improve services. MCOB advises MDOD on matters affecting individuals with disabilities, reviews statewide programs for persons with disabilities, and fosters coordination and support for these programs. Every four years, MCOB helps to develop the State Disabilities Plan to set performance goals for State agencies that serve people with disabilities. The 2016-2019 [plan](#) highlighted goals related to developing self-direction and financial well-being for people living with disabilities, and maximizing resources and accessible communication among State agencies.

Background: According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 1 in 59 children are identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the

United States. In Maryland, 1 in 50 eight-year-olds were identified with ASD in 2014, and boys were 4.5 times more likely to be identified than girls. No significant differences were found in the percentage of white, black, and Hispanic children identified with ASD.

Multiple programs exist within the State for individuals with ASD and their families. For example, the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) within the Maryland State Department of Education operates a Pathways program, which provides educational support services for people with ASD. Pathways is a collaboration between DORS and two- and four- year colleges throughout the State. Students participating in Pathways enroll in credits/certificate classes and register with Disability Support Services (DSS) at their college. DORS Pathways coordinators work with students, their families, and DORS counselors, as well as DSS staff and faculty at the college.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by \$86,084 in fiscal 2021, which accounts for a 90-day start-up delay from the bill’s July 1, 2020 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one State Coordinator for Autism Strategy to develop, implement, and monitor the strategic plan for addressing State autism-related needs, identify performance measures, and serve as a member of MCOB. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Position	1
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$79,818
Operating Expenses	<u>6,266</u>
Total FY 2021 State Expenditures	\$86,084

Future year expenditures reflect a full salary with annual increases and employee turnover and ongoing operating expenses.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Disabilities; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Human Services; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Amberly Holcomb

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