

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 141 (Delegate Vogel)
 Health and Government Operations

Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation

This bill establishes a Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation. By June 30, 2026, the task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the Senate Finance Committee, and the House Health and Government Operations Committee. The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) must provide staff for the task force. A member of the task force may not receive compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025, and terminates June 30, 2027.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$66,400 in FY 2026 only for personnel to staff the task force. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	66,400	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$66,400)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

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 task force must (1) evaluate the causes of and other factors contributing to the sense of loneliness and isolation experienced by individuals in the State; (2) evaluate methods of preventing and eliminating that sense of isolation and loneliness;

(3) recommend local activities, systems, and structures to combat isolation and loneliness, including opportunities for in-person gatherings, especially for individuals who have been living in isolation for extended periods of time; and (4) make recommendations regarding the possibility of creating municipal-based social connection committees to address the challenges of and potential solutions for combatting isolation and loneliness.

The task force comprises 32 members, including (1) 2 members of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of the Senate; (2) 2 members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the House; (3) the Secretary of Human Services (or the Secretary’s designee); (4) the Deputy Secretary for Behavioral Health (or the Deputy Secretary’s designee); and 26 individuals appointed by the Governor, as specified.

Current Law: The State has established various task forces and commissions to study different facets of mental and behavioral health in Maryland, including the Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access, the Behavioral Health Advisory Council, and the Maryland Commission on Health Equity. Chapter 437 of 2022 created the Howard County and Montgomery County Adult Day Health Care Services Pilot Program and a corresponding task force. The pilot program includes activities and social engagement to assist participants in reducing loneliness and depression.

State Expenditures: MDH has determined that one regular full-time and one part-time contractual position is needed to implement the bill. However, the Department of Legislative Services advises that the added responsibilities incurred by this legislation are not permanent and, thus, may be performed by one contractual employee.

Thus, MDH general fund expenditures increase by \$66,390 in fiscal 2026 only, which accounts for the bill’s July 1, 2025 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one full-time contractual employee to staff the task force and write and submit the task force report by June 30, 2026. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, travel, and ongoing operating expenses. This estimate does not reflect other administrative costs such as reimbursement for the 32 task force members.

Contractual Position	1.0
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$54,028
Travel	4,717
Operating Expenses	<u>7,645</u>
Total FY 2026 State Expenditures	\$66,390

Future year expenditures reflect termination of the contractual position on June 30, 2026, the date by which the task force report must be submitted. Should the position need to be extended, general fund expenditures increase by an additional indeterminate amount in fiscal 2027.

This estimate does not include any health insurance costs that could be incurred for specified contractual employees under the State's implementation of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Additional Comments: In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an advisory on loneliness as a public health issue, as it can increase the risk of premature death, disease, heart disease, stroke, anxiety, depression, and dementia. The Surgeon General also issued a National Strategy to Advance Social Connection based on six pillars, including mobilizing the health sector, strengthening social infrastructure in local communities, building a culture of connection, and enacting pro-connection public policies.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Health; Department of Human Services; U.S. Surgeon General; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 27, 2025
km/jc

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