



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET
AND MANAGEMENT

LARRY HOGAN
Governor

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
Lieutenant Governor

DAVID R. BRINKLEY
Secretary

MARC L. NICOLE
Deputy Secretary

HOUSE BILL 1082 Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements (Pena-Melnyk)

STATEMENT OF INFORMATION

DATE: March 31, 2022

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance

SUMMARY OF BILL: HB 1082 designates the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State's Consumer Health Information Hub; requires State and local agencies to use plain language in public communications about health, safety, and social services benefits; and mandates \$350,000 annually to the Hub. The bill sunsets June 30, 2026.

EXPLANATION: The Department of Budget and Management's focus is not on the underlying policy, but on the \$350,000 annual mandated appropriation provision, which impacts the FY 2024 budget and subsequent budgets.

DBM has the responsibility of submitting a balanced budget to the General Assembly annually, which will require spending allocations for FY 2024 to be within the official revenues estimates approved by the Board of Revenue Estimates in December 2022.

Changes to the Maryland Constitution in 2020 provide the General Assembly with additional budgetary authority, beginning in the 2023 Session, to realign total spending by increasing and adding items to appropriations in the budget submitted by the Governor. The legislature's new budgetary power diminishes, if not negates, the need for mandated appropriation bills.

Fully funding the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Kirwan) will require fiscal discipline in the years ahead, if the State is to maintain the current projected structural budget surpluses. Mandated spending increases need to be reevaluated within the context of this education funding priority and the Governor's tax relief proposals.

Economic conditions remain precarious as a result of COVID-19. High rates of inflation and workforce shortages may be short lived or persist, thereby impacting the Maryland economy. While current budget forecasts project structural surpluses, the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to present a significant budgetary vulnerability. The Department continues to urge the General Assembly to focus on maintaining the structural budget surplus.

**For additional information, contact Barbara Wilkins at (410) 260-6371
or barbara.wilkins1@maryland.gov**