

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 295 (Delegate Lehman, *et al.*)
 Ways and Means

Corporate Income Tax - Combined Reporting

This bill requires affiliated corporations to compute Maryland taxable income using combined reporting. The Comptroller must estimate by March 1 of each year the additional tax revenue from corporations, if any, which will be collected in the upcoming fiscal year as a result of using the combined reporting method; the amount must be distributed to the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Fund. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020, and applies to tax year 2021 and beyond.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund revenues increase by \$33.9 million in FY 2021 and by \$138.7 million in FY 2025 from additional corporate income tax revenues attributable to combined reporting. Potential significant increase in general fund expenditures in FY 2021 through 2023 due to administrative costs at the Comptroller’s Office.

(\$ in millions)	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
SF Revenue	\$33.9	\$121.8	\$137.2	\$133.4	\$138.7
GF Expenditure	\$3.2	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0	\$0
Net Effect	\$30.7	\$121.6	\$137.1	\$133.4	\$138.7

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill requires affiliated corporations to compute Maryland taxable income using “combined reporting.” The Comptroller is required to adopt regulations to

carry out the combined reporting provisions of the bill, and the regulations must be consistent with the principles for determining the existence of a unitary business adopted by the Multistate Tax Commission (MTC).

Combined groups are required to file “combined income tax returns,” except as provided by regulations. A corporation that is a member of a combined group must compute its Maryland taxable income using the combined reporting method (1) taking into account the combined income of all members of the combined group; (2) apportioning the combined income to Maryland using the combined factors of all members of the combined group; and (3) allocating the apportioned income among the members of the group that are subject to the Maryland income tax. The bill provides that, subject to regulations issued by the Comptroller, corporations may elect to use the “water’s edge method,” essentially including only corporations incorporated in the United States and those generally having significant United States presence in the combined group for combined filing purposes.

Current Law: A corporate income tax rate of 8.25% is applied to a corporation’s Maryland taxable income. In general, the Maryland corporate income tax is computed using federal provisions to determine income and deductions. Maryland is a “unitary business” State, in that a corporation is required to allocate all of its Maryland income (that portion that is “derived from or reasonably attributable to its trade or business in the State”) attributable to the corporation’s “unitary business.” Essentially, a unitary business exists when the operations of the business in various locations or divisions or through related members of a corporate group are interrelated to and interdependent on each other to such an extent that it is reasonable to treat the business as a single business for tax purposes, and it is not practicable to accurately reflect the income of the various locations, divisions, or related members of a corporate group by separate accounting.

Under Maryland law, however, the application of the unitary business principle is limited in the case of affiliated groups of related corporations because of the requirement that each separate corporation must file a separate income tax return and determine its own taxable income on a separate basis. For a multicorporate group, the unitary business principle is restricted to consider only the isolated income and business activities of each separate legal entity. Even though the activities of related corporations may constitute a single unitary business, the affiliated corporations that lack nexus with the State (or are protected from taxation by federal law) are not subject to the corporate income tax, and neither the net income nor the apportionment factors of those affiliated corporations are taken into account on the corporate income tax return of any related corporation that is subject to the tax.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future Fund is a special nonlapsing fund that may be used only to assist in providing adequate funding for early childhood education and primary and secondary education based on the recommendations of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, including revised education funding formulas. Chapter 771 of 2019 established in statute the policy framework for a world-class education system in Maryland based on the commission's recommendations. When fully phased-in, the commission's recommendations are expected to require an additional \$2.8 billion in State funding and \$1.2 billion in local funding by fiscal 2030.

Background:

Maryland's Corporate Income Tax

Every Maryland corporation and every corporation that conducts business within Maryland, including public service companies and financial institutions, are required to pay the corporate income tax. The tax base is the portion of federal taxable income, as determined for federal income tax purposes and adjusted for certain Maryland addition and subtraction modifications, that is allocable to Maryland. Federal taxable income, for this purpose, is the difference between total federal income and total federal deductions (including any special deductions).

The next step is to calculate a corporation's Maryland taxable income. The Maryland taxable income of a corporation that operates wholly within the State is equal to its Maryland modified income. Corporations engaged in multistate operations are required to determine the portion of their modified income attributable to Maryland, based on the amount of their trade or business carried out in Maryland.

Prior to tax year 2018, corporations were generally required to use either a three-factor apportionment formula of payroll, property, and sales, with sales double weighted or, in the case of a manufacturing corporation, a one-factor formula based on sales, referred to as a single sales factor formula. The apportionment factor is then multiplied by the corporation's modified income to determine Maryland taxable income.

Chapters 341 and 342 of 2018 phase in a requirement that all corporations subject to the corporate income tax, with an exception for specified worldwide headquartered companies, use a single sales factor formula to apportion income to the State.

The Maryland tax liability of a corporation equals the Maryland taxable income multiplied by the tax rate, less any tax credits.

Combined Reporting

As **Exhibit 1** shows, more than half of the states and the District of Columbia currently require some form of combined reporting. The other states, including Maryland, allow or require that taxes on income be computed on the basis of the books and records of separate corporate entities without regard to the fact that the entity may be a member of a commonly owned and controlled group of entities functioning as a single business.

Exhibit 1 States with Combined Reporting

Alaska	Kentucky	New York
Arizona	Maine	North Dakota
California	Massachusetts	Ohio
Colorado	Michigan	Rhode Island
Connecticut	Minnesota	Texas
District of Columbia	Montana	Utah
Hawaii	Nebraska	Vermont
Idaho	New Hampshire	West Virginia
Illinois	New Jersey	Wisconsin
Kansas	New Mexico	

Source: CCH Intelliconnect

Of the states with combined reporting, 11 are members of the MTC. Member states pool their resources to select candidates for tax audits. The commission's audit staff performs these audits as though they were part of a state's own audit staff, forwarding their findings and recommendations to the member states for assessment and collection at the completion of the audit.

Comptroller's Analysis of Combined Reporting

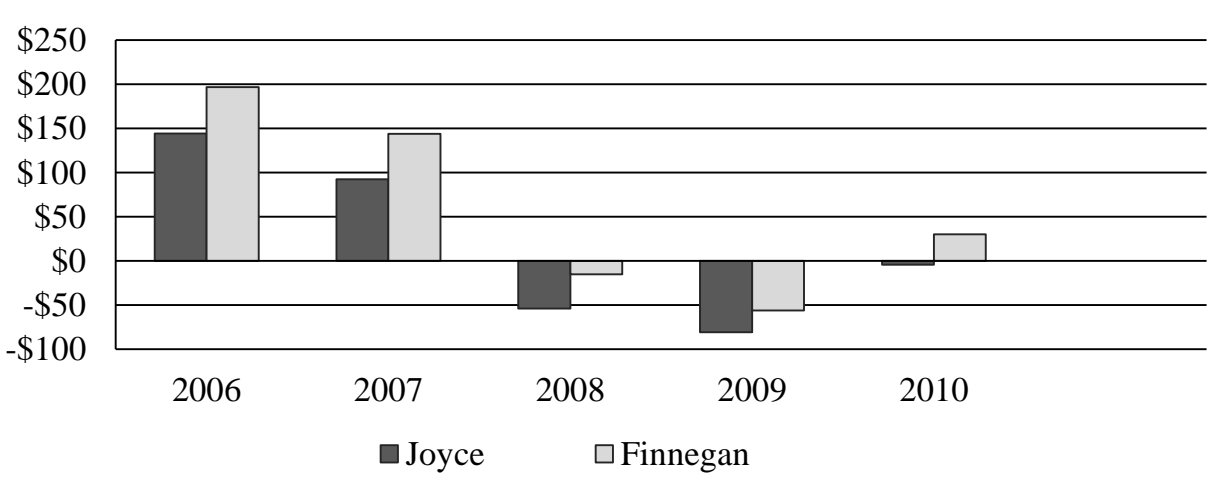
The Comptroller's Office issued its most recent analysis of the revenue impact of combined reporting in March 2013, including an initial analysis of the impact combined reporting would have had on corporate income tax returns filed in tax year 2010. The Comptroller's Office estimated the impact under two different methods of apportioning the income of a combined group to Maryland (known as "Joyce" and "Finnegan") and concluded that the specific method employed could alter the estimated revenue impacts. Under both methods, the denominator of the apportionment factor is based on the total payroll, property, and sales of all members of the unitary group, regardless of whether they are subject to Maryland's corporate income tax (have nexus with Maryland). Under the Joyce method of

apportionment, the numerator consists of the payroll, property, and sales of all of the entities in the group with nexus. The Finnegan method apportions the payroll, property, and sales of all entities with nexus with Maryland as well as the payroll, property, and sales of companies that make sales into the State.

The Comptroller’s Office estimates that the Joyce method of apportionment would have decreased corporate income tax revenues in tax year 2010 by about \$4.5 million, and revenues would have increased by \$30.1 million under Finnegan. About 65% of the revenues that would have been generated under Finnegan in tax year 2010 were attributable to corporations in the retail trade and accommodation and food services industries.

Tax year 2010 data shows that the total tax liabilities for health care and social assistance, transportation and warehousing, and utility industries would have been almost \$40.9 million lower under Joyce, while the retail, professional, scientific, and technical services and administrative support, waste management, and remediation services industries would have paid about \$37.7 million more in tax. It should be noted that even within industries with a significant change in total tax liabilities, the change was not uniform for all corporations. For example, in tax year 2010, under Finnegan, 32% of corporations would have had a tax decrease, 40% a tax increase, and 28% would have had no change. **Exhibit 2** shows the corporate income tax revenues under the Finnegan and Joyce methods from tax year 2006 through 2010.

Exhibit 2
Effect of Combined Reporting
Tax Year 2006-2010
(\$ in Millions)



Source: Comptroller’s Office

State Revenues: The bill requires combined reporting for corporations beginning in tax year 2021. The Comptroller must distribute the estimated additional tax revenue generated by combined reporting to the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Fund. As a result, special fund revenues increase by \$33.9 million in fiscal 2021 and by \$138.7 million in fiscal 2025, as shown in **Exhibit 3**.

Exhibit 3
Fiscal Impact of Legislation
Fiscal 2021-2025
(\$ in Millions)

	<u>FY 2021</u>	<u>FY 2022</u>	<u>FY 2023</u>	<u>FY 2024</u>	<u>FY 2025</u>
Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Fund	\$33.9	\$121.8	\$137.2	\$133.4	\$138.7

The estimated impact for combined reporting reflects the average impact of combined reporting in prior tax years, adjusted for subsequent changes in the economy and corporate income tax revenues. It also reflects combined reporting using the Finnegan method. The actual impact of combined reporting could vary significantly from the estimates based on these variables and the implementation of combined reporting as adopted by regulations. In any given year, revenues could decrease significantly due to the high level of volatility in factors that influence the corporate income tax.

Although not required by the bill, this analysis assumes that fiscal 2021 estimated tax payments attributable to combined reporting are distributed to the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Fund.

Additionally, if the Comptroller participates in the MTC income tax audit program, it has the potential to increase revenues by an additional \$1.0 million annually, which is not reflected in Exhibit 3.

State Expenditures: The Comptroller’s Office reports that it will incur additional expenditures beginning in fiscal 2021 in order to implement combined reporting. These expenses include:

- hiring two contractual tax consultants to respond to legal questions, process amended returns, and create tax forms and webpages beginning in part of fiscal 2021 through one-half of fiscal 2023;

- hiring one contractual revenue examiner to handle an expected increase in taxpayer queries beginning in part of fiscal 2021 through one-half of fiscal 2023;
- consultant fees for aiding in drafting regulations and administrative implementation;
- computer programming expenditures, including processing changes to the income tax return processing and imaging systems and systems testing;
- taxpayer notification expenses; and
- providing training to corporate audit and taxpayer service staff.

Exhibit 4 shows the estimated administrative costs at the Comptroller's Office in fiscal 2021 through 2023. The Comptroller's Office is transitioning from its SMART system to a new integrated tax system, the Compass project. It is expected that the corporate income tax will transition to the new system during the first quarter of 2021. The cost of modifying the Compass system for combined reporting will depend on contract renegotiations, thus, it is unknown at this time. However, since the corporate income tax is the third largest tax type in the State and the entire Compass project is projected to cost over \$150.0 million, the Comptroller estimates that it may cost approximately \$2.5 million in fiscal 2021 to add combined reporting to the system. The Department of Legislative Services notes that since these costs are unknown, the actual costs could vary.

Additionally, if the Comptroller participates in the MTC's income tax audit program, which would require the Comptroller's Office to provide assessments on audits of multistate businesses, expenditures will increase by \$200,000 annually. The Comptroller's Office can estimate the additional tax revenue from combined reporting with existing resources, since there is no provision requiring a separate informational filing form for affected corporations.

Exhibit 4
Comptroller's Office Administrative Expenses
Fiscal 2021-2023

	<u>FY 2021</u>	<u>FY 2022</u>	<u>FY 2023</u>
Computer Programming	\$2,500,000	\$0	\$0
Consultants	550,000	0	0
Contractual Employees	94,700	126,700	65,100
Training Expenses	41,550	0	0
Taxpayer Notification	38,750	0	0
Total Expenses	\$3,225,000	\$126,700	\$65,100

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Comptroller's Office; CCH Intelliconnect; Multistate Tax Commission; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 11, 2020
af/rjr

Analysis by: Heather N. MacDonagh

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