

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 722

(Senator Benson, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

Task Force to Reduce Incarceration in Maryland

This bill establishes a Task Force to Reduce Incarceration in Maryland. The task force must study and make recommendations to address the challenges of excessive criminalizing of nonviolent offenses and incarceration of nonviolent offenders. The task force is required to meet at least once per month and hold at least two public meetings.

The Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP) must provide staff for the task force, which must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2014.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2014, and terminates June 30, 2015.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures for GOCCP increase by \$54,000 in FY 2015 only to hire a contractual task force manager. Any expense reimbursements for task force members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

(in dollars)	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	0	54,000	0	0	0
Net Effect	\$0	(\$54,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The task force is required to address specified matters relating to (1) decriminalization of drug possession offenses; (2) alternate substance abuse control strategies to reduce taxpayer costs and help juvenile offenders; (3) how statewide implementation of certain evidence-based programs could be coordinated with local courts and corrections programs for specified purposes; (4) how Maryland's prisons and detention centers could be improved by taking certain actions; and (5) specified statewide employment initiatives to assist residents to successfully complete corrections programs.

Task force members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations.

Background: According to the Center on Sentencing and Corrections at the Vera Institute of Justice, nationally, over the past 20 years, the prison population in the United States has almost tripled. Nearly 1 in 100 adults in the country are estimated to have been in jail or prison. Some of these individuals are violent, high-risk, offenders. However, many are nonviolent offenders considered to be low-risk offenders. Once released, it is estimated that about half of all prisoners are incarcerated again within three years, either for a new offense or for violating the conditions of release. Vera believes that this high reliance on incarceration brings with it substantial fiscal and social consequences, including large correctional budgets and weakened communities. Vera and the Pew Research Center are currently engaged in some projects to research and identify inefficient and ineffective state and federal policies and identify alternative approaches. Vera provides technical assistance to the states to examine these findings and engage in problem solving.

State Expenditures: GOCCP advises that, due to the scope of the task force, including the bill's requirement to meet monthly, hold public meetings, and prepare a report on a wide range of issues, GOCCP cannot meet the bill's requirements with existing staff. Accordingly, general fund expenditures increase by \$54,035 in fiscal 2015. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring a contractual task force manager for one year. It includes a contractual salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and operating expenses for fiscal 2015 only, since the bill terminates at the end of fiscal 2015.

Contractual Position	1
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$49,230
Additional Equipment	4,370
Other Operating Expenses	<u>435</u>
Total FY 2015 State Expenditures	\$54,035

Although the bill has a June 1, 2014 effective date, it is assumed that no costs are incurred until fiscal 2015.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1330 (Delegate Swain) – Judiciary.

Information Source(s): Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention, Vera Institute of Justice, Pew Research Center, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 17, 2014
ncs/lgc Revised - Updated Information - February 18, 2014

Analysis by: Guy G. Cherry

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