

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1191
Ways and Means

(Delegate Ebersole, *et al.*)

Task Force to Study an Online Program for Paraprofessionals Assisting Students
With Autism

This bill establishes a Task Force to Study an Online Program for Paraprofessionals Assisting Students with Autism. The State Superintendent of Schools, or designee, chairs the task force, and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) staffs the task force. Membership of the task force may be expanded beyond those specified in the bill, but any additional members are nonvoting. Members are not compensated but may be reimbursed for their expenses. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by December 31, 2016.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2016, and terminates June 30, 2017.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. MSDE can staff the task force and provide expense reimbursements with existing budgeted resources. No effect on revenues.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The task force must:

- establish an overall plan to create a program to provide online training to paraprofessionals who work with students with autism;

- investigate existing programs and current implementation practices;
- analyze online training methods regarding supporting students with autism; and
- make recommendations on how best to establish an online training program for paraprofessionals who work with students with autism.

Background: Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that typically manifests itself during the first three years of life and results from a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain. Autism and autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) are characterized by impairments in social interaction, problems with verbal and nonverbal communication, repetitive behavior, and restricted interests and activities. ASD affects an estimated 1 in 68 children in the United States. This represents a 23% increase from 2008.

More people than ever before are being diagnosed with an ASD. It is unclear exactly how much of this increase is due to a broader definition of ASDs and better efforts in diagnosis. However, a true increase in the number of people with an ASD cannot be ruled out. Researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention believe the increase in ASD diagnosis is likely due to a combination of these factors.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

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md/rhh

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