

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 978
Appropriations

(Delegate M. Washington, *et al.*)

Task Force to Study Housing, Health, and Economic Stability of Maryland
Seniors

This bill establishes the Task Force to Study Housing, Health, and Economic Stability of Maryland Seniors. The Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, or the Secretary's designee, must serve as the chair of the task force, and the Maryland Department of Aging (MDoA) and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) must provide staff. A member of the task force may not receive compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses. The task force must submit a preliminary report on its study to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 31, 2017, and submit a final report, including its findings and recommendations, to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 31, 2017.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2016, and terminates December 31, 2017.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for MDoA and DHMH are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: It is assumed that representatives of local governments are able to attend task force meetings without negatively impacting local operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The task force must:

- identify the public and private-sector programs, services, and resources currently available to meet the needs of seniors living in the State;
- assess the coordination of priorities, funding, and systems among all State and local agencies that provide any funding, services, or programs for seniors;
- assess the adequacy of State funding and systems ensuring access to affordable senior living housing and supportive services for seniors;
- assess the use and adequacy of Medicaid and mental, behavioral, and general health long-term care, regulations, and reimbursement policies;
- assess issues concerning the long-term care and home care workforce;
- compile existing information on, identify, and study the unique needs of seniors living in various areas of the State;
- identify gaps in the public and private-sector programs, services, and resources available to meet the needs of seniors living in the State; and
- collect, analyze, evaluate, and report on demographic and economic data on seniors who are full-time residents in the State.

The task force must make recommendations on:

- legislation and policy initiatives to address the needs of seniors living in the State;
- funding requirements and budgetary priorities to address the needs of seniors living in the State;
- the roles of the family, caregiver, primary care physician, and community in working toward maintaining personal independence; and
- any other relevant issues or considerations identified by the task force.

Current Law/Background: MDoA receives State general funds, as approved by the General Assembly, and federal funds through the Older Americans Act, Medicaid, and other sources to carry out its mission. MDoA works closely with DHMH to administer a variety of programs. Generally, MDoA is tasked with:

- administering programs mandated by the federal government;
- establishing priorities for meeting the needs of Maryland's senior citizens;
- evaluating the service needs of Maryland's senior citizens and determining whether or not programs meet these needs;
- serving as an advocate for older adults at all levels of government; and
- reviewing and formulating policy recommendations to the Governor for programs that have an impact on senior citizens.

State Plan on Aging

Under the requirements of the Older Americans Act of 1965, every four years MDoA is required to submit a State Plan on Aging to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living. The plan currently in effect through September 30, 2016, details the efforts of MDoA and the local area agencies on aging (AAAs, which provide services either directly or through contracts) to meet the needs of older adults. In developing services and programs under the State Plan, MDoA takes into account the needs of older adults as expressed through hearings, evaluation tools, and waiting lists, as well as State and federal mandates. The needs of older adults are also represented through AAAs in the development of area plans and in formal and informal discussions held with members of the aging network. Views of advisory councils, commissions on aging, and senior groups are reflected in the development of the State Plan on Aging.

In the process of developing the current State Plan on Aging, MDoA examined a wide variety of critical issues and trends facing seniors in the State. These included civic engagement, emergency preparedness, housing, long-term services and supports, physical and mental health (including issues related to dementia), protection of vulnerable adults, transportation, and workforce development.

MDoA is currently in the process of developing the State Plan on Aging for fiscal 2017 through 2020.

State Expenditures: MDoA advises that, expenditures related to staffing the task force and preparing the report require hiring a half-time contractual employee on July 1 (accounting for a 30-day start-up delay) for the remaining 16-month period before the final report is due, at a cost of \$32,009 in fiscal 2017 and \$8,533 in fiscal 2018. However, the Department of Legislative Services notes that staffing duties for the task force are shared with DHMH, and that a significant portion of the scope of the task force and related reporting requirements generally align with elements of the current State Plan on Aging. While the information collected and analyzed during the development of the forthcoming State Plan may differ somewhat from the information collected and analyzed while developing the current plan, MDoA can likely utilize much of the research and analysis already compiled for the forthcoming plan to fulfill the bill's requirements. As a result, MDoA and DHMH can likely fulfill the bill's requirements using existing resources, even though staff may need to be diverted from other priorities.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: Although designated as a cross file, SB 604 (Senator Pugh – Finance) is different.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Aging, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 29, 2016
min/ljm

Analysis by: Nathan W. McCurdy

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