

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 1504
 Appropriations

(Delegate Valentino-Smith, *et al.*)

Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education

This bill establishes the Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education. The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) must provide staff for the task force. In addition, the Chancellor of the University System of Maryland (USM) must appoint an individual to assist MHEC with staffing. Members of the task force may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses, as provided in the State budget. The task force must submit an interim report by December 1, 2020, and a final report by December 1, 2021. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2020, and terminates May 31, 2022.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: No effect in FY 2020. General fund expenditures increase by an estimated \$60,200 in FY 2021 and \$25,400 in FY 2022 to staff the task force. Any expense reimbursements for members of the task force are assumed to be minimal and absorbable with existing budgeted resources. Future years reflect the elimination of the contractual position and subsequent termination of the task force. No effect on revenues.

(in dollars)	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	60,200	25,400	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$60,200)	(\$25,400)	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The task force must:

- study the policies and procedures adopted by institutions of higher education in the State regarding access to mental health care and the prevention and treatment of mental illness in students;
- examine the challenges for institutions of higher education in meeting the demand for mental health services;
- review best practices for accessing off-campus mental health services;
- review best practices for, and barriers to, the implementation of counseling services, including crisis, personal, mental health, sexual violence, and substance abuse counseling;
- review and identify the best models for accessing mental health services, including consideration of stand-alone centers, centers with integrated student health services, comprehensive services, case management, and crisis resources;
- identify concerns in rural areas and workforce shortage areas; and
- study any other matters the task force considers appropriate.

Further, the task force must make recommendations regarding:

- ways to reduce costs and barriers to providing access to mental health services on campus;
- the use of telemedicine and video conferencing;
- the use of hotlines and other means to disseminate information to students related to mental health services concerning availability and fees;
- the implementation of general mental health counseling services and specialized counseling services; and
- any other matters the task force considers appropriate.

The bill establishes the membership of the task force. The Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House must jointly designate the chair of the task force.

Current Law/Background: According to the American Psychological Association (APA), a rising number of college students are seeking treatment at campus counseling centers for serious mental health problems. The majority of campuses surveyed noted increases over the past five years of anxiety disorders, crises requiring immediate response, psychiatric medication issues, and clinical depression. In addition, APA noted an increase in the number of students seeking services to deal with sexual assault and self-harming behaviors.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures for MHEC increase by \$60,200 in fiscal 2021, which reflects the cost of hiring one full-time contractual employee to staff the task force and assumes a 30-day start-up delay from the bill’s June 1, 2020 effective date. General fund expenditures for MHEC increase by \$25,385 in fiscal 2022, which assumes the contractual position remains in place for half of the fiscal year. The estimate includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Contractual Position	1
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$54,675
One-time Start-up costs	4,890
Operating Expenses	<u>635</u>
Total FY 2021 State Expenditures	\$60,200

This estimate does not include any health insurance costs that could be incurred for specified contractual employees under the State’s implementation of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Future year expenditures reflect elimination of the contractual position on December 31, 2021, after the report is due, and subsequent termination of the task force.

Any expense reimbursements for task force members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources. USM can appoint an individual to assist MHEC with staffing using existing resources. Institutions can provide any requested information using existing resources.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: SB 1015 (Senator Eckardt) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): Maryland Higher Education Commission; University System of Maryland; American Psychological Association; Department of Legislative Services

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