

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

House Bill 1263 (Delegate Rosenberg)  
Health and Government Operations

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Maryland Department of Health – COVID–19 Vaccination Plan

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This emergency bill requires the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), with input from subject matter experts and stakeholders, to develop and submit to the General Assembly a comprehensive COVID-19 vaccination plan. The plan must be submitted by April 1, 2021, and include specified information on (1) categories of residents who will receive priority access to vaccines; (2) the timeline for providing vaccines in each of the priority categories and for the general public; (3) target metrics for vaccinating residents in each of the priority categories and for the general public; (4) a dedication of time and resources to assist senior citizens living in their homes to receive the vaccine in a manner that minimizes wait lines or travel times; (5) a dedication of time and resources to target vaccine distribution and vaccine safety outreach efforts to communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19; and (6) an education campaign on COVID-19 vaccines, with specific information on how to register and where vaccines will be administered. After submission of the plan, MDH must provide weekly progress reports to the General Assembly for the duration of calendar 2021. **The bill terminates December 31, 2022.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill’s requirements can likely be handled with existing budgeted resources, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Current Law:** Chapters 13 and 14 of 2020 authorized the Governor to facilitate access to health care and the provision of that care and to mitigate costs to individuals for COVID-19 diagnosis and treatment. Among other actions, the Governor may require carriers and Medicaid to cover a COVID-19 immunization (and any associated costs), without cost-sharing, if the patient belongs to a category of individuals to whom MDH has determined cost-sharing should not apply.

In December 2020, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved both Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna's COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use. Due to limited quantities, distribution began with priority groups as determined by states. Maryland began distribution in January 2021 with Phase 1A, which includes health care workers, residents and staff of nursing homes, first responders, public safety, corrections staff, and front-line Judiciary staff. Phase 1B began January 18, 2021, and includes residents of assisted living facilities and other congregate settings, adults age 75 and older, staff of K-12 schools and child care facilities, high-risk incarcerated individuals, and those involved in continuity of government. As of February 18, 2021, the State is in Phase 1C, which includes adults aged 65 and older, additional public safety and public health workers, and essential workers in food/agriculture, manufacturing, public transit, and the postal service. Phase 2 will include individuals aged 16 to 64 at increased risk of severe illness, incarcerated adults, and remaining essential workers. Phase 3 will include the general public.

As of February 18, 2021, 1.39 million doses of the vaccine have been *distributed* in Maryland (812,165 first doses and 581,785 second doses), and 970,457 doses have been *administered*. The MDH dashboard – [coronavirus.maryland.gov/#Vaccine](https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/#Vaccine) – contains updated data.

**State Expenditures:** MDH advises that the bill may have an operational and/or fiscal impact on the department as it is in the midst of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout and is constantly refining plans to adjust to the evolving situation and information from the federal government. MDH notes that input from a variety of stakeholders is incorporated into the vaccine planning process and that an education campaign (GOVAX) is in place ([covidlink.maryland.gov/content/vaccine/govax/](https://covidlink.maryland.gov/content/vaccine/govax/)). It is unclear whether MDH's current activities satisfy the requirements of the bill. Therefore, to the extent additional resources are needed, general fund expenditures may increase by an indeterminate amount.

The Department of Legislative Services notes that MDH can likely prepare and submit the required COVID-19 vaccination plan using existing resources.

## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 19, 2021  
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