

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 147 (Senator Feldman)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Task Force on Higher Education Students With Chronic Health Conditions

This bill establishes the Task Force on Higher Education Students with Chronic Health Conditions to be jointly appointed and staffed by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). A task force member may not receive compensation as a member of the task force but is entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses. By December 31, 2022, the task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly. The report must also be made available to the public. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2021, and terminates June 30, 2023.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MDH and MHEC can appoint and staff the task force and provide any expense reimbursements for members with existing budgeted resources, as discussed below. No effect on revenues.

Local Effect: Local government operations and finances are not materially affected as community college representatives can participate on the task force with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: MDH and MHEC must jointly appoint members of the task force, as specified, and the Secretary of Health and the chairperson of MHEC (or their designees) must serve as co-chairs.

The task force must obtain and study existing publicly available data on undergraduate and graduate students with chronic health conditions at institutions of higher education in the State and make recommendations on:

- enhancing and continuing systematic data collection on students with chronic health conditions;
- eliminating existing challenges and accommodating the needs of students with chronic health conditions to ensure they receive reasonable, effective, and appropriate higher education in the State; and
- meeting the long-term resource demands of and the need for programs for students with chronic health conditions.

The task force may use State, federal, and academic resources to carry out its duties under the bill, including obtaining policies on accommodating students with chronic health conditions from institutions of higher education within the State or in other states.

Current Law: The University System of Maryland (USM) does not have a policy specifically addressing the accommodation of students with chronic health conditions. The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) also reviewed the policies of several large USM institutions and did not find such a policy. USM [policy](#) does require that all policies, programs, and activities of the university system be in conformity with all pertinent federal and State laws on nondiscrimination regarding race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex, and disability.

State Expenditures: MHEC advises that it can staff the task force with existing resources, while MDH advises that it requires a half-time program administrator to do so. DLS advises that the agencies are *authorized* (but not required) to staff the task force under the bill. Further, it is assumed that staffing duties, at least initially, will largely be undertaken by MHEC due to the ongoing demands of the COVID-19 pandemic on MDH. Even so, to the extent both agencies provide staff support, the bill charges the task force with reviewing publicly available data. Thus, DLS finds the task force can be staffed within budgeted resources.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1457 of 2018 passed the House with amendments and received a hearing in the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, but no further action was taken.

Designated Cross File: HB 59 (Delegate Pena-Melnyk) - Appropriations.

Information Source(s): Maryland Higher Education Commission; University System of Maryland; Morgan State University; St. Mary's College of Maryland; Maryland Independent College and University Association; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

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