

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 Third Reader

House Bill 1352
 Appropriations

(Delegate Patterson, *et al.*)

Education, Energy, and the Environment and
 Finance

Sickle Cell Disease - Institutions of Higher Education - Policies, Procedures, and
 Educational Campaigns

This bill prohibits an institution of higher education from denying access to facilities or services to a student based on a sickle cell disease (SCD) diagnosis and requires provision of reasonable accommodations. Each institution must establish a process for reporting violations and publicize access requirements and reporting procedures. The Maryland Department of Health (MDH), in consultation with specified organizations, must develop an education and awareness campaign for institutions regarding students with SCD. MDH and the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) must create uniform procedures for institutions to follow in assessing, supporting, and treating students with SCD. Beginning December 1, 2025, MDH and MHEC must provide technical assistance to institutions to implement such procedures and develop a process to monitor compliance. MDH must also develop or compile SCD educational materials for institutional employees.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$109,600 and \$121,600 in FY 2026 and 2027, respectively, for contractual personnel, as discussed below. Institutions of higher education can likely meet the requirements of the bill using existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	109,600	121,600	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$109,600)	(\$121,600)	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Local Effect: Local community colleges can likely meet the requirements of the bill using existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Education and Awareness Campaign

MDH, in consultation with specified entities, must develop an education and awareness campaign, which must describe challenges faced by young adults living with SCD and provide information on accommodations and support that institutions can provide to students with SCD.

Uniform Procedures and Technical Assistance

MDH and MHEC must provide technical assistance to institutions to implement uniform procedures and instruct institutional personnel regarding the procedures developed.

Educational Resources

Each institution is encouraged to conduct awareness campaigns and educational sessions based on the materials developed or compiled under the bill as financial resources allow.

Current Law:

Institution of Higher Education

“Institution of higher education” is defined as an institution of postsecondary education that generally limits enrollment to graduates of secondary schools and awards degrees at either the associate, baccalaureate, or graduate level. It includes public, private nonprofit, and for-profit institutions.

Sickle Cell Disease

SCD is a group of inherited red blood cell disorders in which the cells become hard and sticky and look like a C-shaped farm tool called a “sickle.” Approximately 4,000 individuals in Maryland have SCD. In Maryland, all newborn babies are screened for SCD as part of universal newborn screening. The screening includes sickle cell trait, sickle beta thalassemia, and SCD testing and identifies newborns that are “at risk” for potential disorders. Information is also provided on whether additional diagnostic testing is required.

On determination of the presence of sickle cell anemia, MDH must (1) notify the physician of record or the institution where the child is born, and the parents or guardian of the infant;

(2) provide the parents or guardian of the infant and the physician with educational materials; and (3) offer referral for genetic counseling. Within two months after a positive finding of sickle cell anemia, a confirmatory test must be administered, and the results must be reported to MDH.

On determination of the presence of sickle beta thalassemia, which indicates the presence of thalassemia, a laboratory must notify the appropriate health care provider, who often refers the newborn to a hematologist. Additional testing can confirm the type of thalassemia abnormality present. MDH advises that there is no current requirement for a health care provider to notify parents or guardians of a newborn's thalassemia trait status, or to provide the parent with educational materials.

State/Local Expenditures:

Maryland Department of Health

Under the bill, MDH must (1) develop an education and awareness campaign for institutions, including information on accommodations and support and (2) develop or compile materials to provide comprehensive education on SCD to the institutions' employees. In consultation with MHEC, MDH must also (1) develop uniform procedures for institutions to follow regarding students with SCD; (2) provide technical assistance to institutions to implement the procedures and instruct personnel about the procedures; and (3) develop a process to monitor the implementation of the procedures.

MDH advises that additional resources are needed to implement the bill. Thus, MDH general fund expenditures increase by \$69,498 in fiscal 2026. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one contractual program administrator to develop an education and awareness campaign in consultation with SCD providers, develop or compile SCD educational materials for institutions, and work with MHEC to develop uniform procedures for institutions, provide technical assistance to institutions to implement them, and develop a process to monitor implementation of the procedures. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Contractual Position	1.0
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$62,129
Operating Expenses	<u>7,369</u>
Total FY 2026 MDH Expenditures	\$69,498

Future year expenditures reflect a full salary with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

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 (ACA).

This analysis assumes that once the education and awareness campaign, educational materials, and uniform procedures have been developed and initially implemented by institutions (presumably by the start of the 2026-2027 academic year), the position will provide ongoing technical assistance and monitor initial implementation for that academic year before terminating on June 30, 2027. After that time, it is assumed that MDH can absorb ongoing responsibilities under the bill with existing budgeted resources.

Maryland Higher Education Commission

Under the bill, MHEC must provide consultation to MDH to develop uniform procedures for institutions to follow regarding students with SCD and, jointly with MDH, (1) provide technical assistance to institutions to implement the procedures and instruct personnel about them and (2) develop a process to monitor implementation.

Currently, MHEC does not have dedicated staff to provide statewide coordinated support for campuses and health-related policies and cannot absorb more such duties as required by the bill. As a result, MHEC general fund expenditures increase by \$40,105 in fiscal 2026. This estimate reflects the cost to hire one part-time (50%) contractual staff specialist III to provide consultation to MDH on uniform procedures and to, jointly with MDH, provide technical assistance and develop a process to monitor implementation of the procedures by institutions. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Contractual Position	0.5
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$33,150
Operating Expenses	<u>6,955</u>
Total FY 2026 MHEC Expenditures	\$40,105

Future year expenditures reflect a full salary with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses. As discussed above, this analysis assumes that the position terminates on June 30, 2027. After that time, it is assumed that MHEC can more readily absorb ongoing responsibilities under the bill with existing budgeted resources.

This estimate does not include any health insurance costs that could be incurred for specified contractual employees under the State’s implementation of the ACA.

Institutions of Higher Education

With technical assistance from the contractual staff at MDH and MHEC described above, it is assumed that institutions of higher education – including public four-year institutions and local community colleges – can implement the bill’s requirements using existing resources. However, some resources may need to be temporarily diverted from current health initiatives. This estimate assumes that accommodations are generally low-cost to implement, such as providing extra time on assignments, bathroom access, hydration access, and flexible attendance policies. More extensive accommodations, such as providing transportation between classes, may increase higher education expenditures but have not been considered as part of this estimate.

Additional Comments: The Maryland Independent College and University Association advises that private nonprofit institutions can likely develop and implement a policy for awareness of SCD using existing resources.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

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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