

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 15 (Senator Conway)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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**Task Force to Study the Implementation of a Dyslexia Education Program**

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This bill establishes a Task Force to Study the Implementation of a Dyslexia Education Program. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must provide staff support for the task force. The task force must determine current practices for identifying and treating dyslexia in students in Maryland public schools and in other states; determine the appropriate structure for establishing a dyslexia education program and make specified related recommendations; and develop a pilot program to initiate the implementation of the task force's recommendations in an appropriately limited geographical area. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor; the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee; and the House Ways and Means Committee by December 30, 2015.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2015, and terminates June 30, 2016.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for MSDE are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing resources. It is assumed that the task force is authorized to *develop* the framework for a pilot program, but not to begin implementation of the pilot program.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Bill Summary:** The task force must make recommendations on:

- the feasibility of funding a dyslexia education program through MSDE and/or alternative funding mechanisms;
- the appropriate methodologies for testing students and identifying dyslexia and predyslexia tendencies in students;
- the appropriate age to begin testing for dyslexia and predyslexia tendencies in students; and
- the best practices for treating and educating students identified as having dyslexia or predyslexia tendencies.

**Current Law:** The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that a student with disabilities be provided a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, in accordance with the Individualized Education Program specific to the individual needs of the student. The State and local school systems must implement IDEA consistent with requirements regarding the location, identification, evaluation, provision of special education and related services, and the provision of a free appropriate public education to children with disabilities. This includes adherence to specified timelines intended to avoid delay of services to a child identified as a child with a disability in need of special education and related services.

**Background:** Dyslexia is characterized by an unexpected difficulty in reading in individuals who otherwise possess the intelligence and motivation needed for accurate and fluent reading. An often cited *New England Journal of Medicine* article indicates that the prevalence of dyslexia among school-age children in the United States is estimated to range from 5% to 17%.

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## Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** SB 871 of 2014 received a hearing in the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. No further action was taken.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education, *Society of Biological Psychiatry*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 20, 2015

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