

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 585 (Delegate Pena-Melnyk, *et al.*)

Health and Government Operations

Finance

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Nursing Homes - Safe Patient Lifting

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This bill requires each nursing home in the State to establish a safe patient lifting workgroup by December 1, 2008 and a safe patient lifting policy to reduce employee injuries associated with patient lifting by July 1, 2009.

The workgroup has to consider • patient handling hazard assessment processes; • enhanced use of mechanical lifting devices; • specialized lift teams; • training for patient care personnel; • incorporating mechanical lifting devices into construction and renovation plans; and • developing an evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of the policy.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** None. The bill would not materially affect State operations or finances.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal to none.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** Chapters 56 and 57 of 2007 required hospitals to establish a safe patient lifting committee by December 1, 2007 and a safe patient lifting policy by July 1, 2008.

**Background:** Nursing personnel are consistently listed as one of the top 10 occupations for work-related musculoskeletal disorders, with incidence rates of at least 13.5 per 100

in nursing home settings and 8.8 per 100 in hospital settings. While there has been a steady decline in the rates of most occupational injuries since 1992, work-related musculoskeletal disorders in nursing continue to rise.

The most common patient handling approaches in the U.S. include manual patient lifting, classes in body mechanics, training in safe lifting techniques, and back belts. There is strong evidence, however, that these approaches have not been effective in reducing caregiver injuries. To date, the interventions with the strongest level of evidence at reducing caregiver injuries include • use of patient handling equipment/devices; • patient care ergonomic assessment protocols; • no lift policies; and • patient lift teams.

Seven states (including Maryland regarding hospitals) have enacted safe patient handling legislation. Legislation has been introduced in nine other states and the U.S. House of Representatives.

There are about 234 licensed nursing homes in Maryland.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** “Evidence-Based Practices for Safe Patient Handling and Movement,” A. Nelson and A. Baptiste, *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, September 30, 2004; “Fourth Veto on Safe Patient Handling for California,” *Ergonomics Today*, October 29, 2007; Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Department of Legislative Services

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