

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

124th General Assembly of Ohio

Ohio Legislative Service Commission
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BILL: Sub. S.B. 290 DATE: December 9, 2002

STATUS: As Passed by the House SPONSOR: Sen. Coughlin

LOCAL IMPACT STATEMENT REQUIRED: No — Minimal cost

CONTENTS: Creates the statewide emergency alert program to aid in the identification and location of abducted children, establishes activation criteria for the implementation of the program, creates the AMBER Alert Advisory Committee, and declares an emergency

State Fiscal Highlights

| STATE FUND | FY 2003* | FY 2004* | FUTURE YEARS* |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| General Revenue Fund | | | |
| Revenues | - 0 - | - 0 - | - 0 - |
| Expenditures | Minimal increase, at most | Minimal increase, at most | Minimal increase, at most |
| Other State Funds | | | |
| Revenues | - 0 - | - 0 - | - 0 - |
| Expenditures | Minimal increase, at most | Minimal increase, at most | Minimal increase, at most |

Note: The state fiscal year is July 1 through June 30. For example, FY 2003 is July 1, 2002 – June 30, 2003.

*It is unclear as to which of their respective revenue streams that the Office of the Attorney General and the Department of Public Safety might use to cover the minimal ongoing annual operating costs created by the bill.

- **Department of Public Safety.** The two state entities that would most likely experience any notable fiscal effects from the bill will be the Office of the Attorney General and the Department of Public Safety, as it appears that these state agencies would play a lead role in developing, implementing, and subsequently coordinating the state's involvement in the statewide emergency alert program. At this time, it does not appear that the burdens associated with the bill will create more than minimal ongoing annual costs. How these two state agencies might cover those ongoing annual costs is uncertain. Presumably, these two state agencies could draw on moneys from any number of their respective funding streams, including the General Revenue Fund, the General Services Fund Group, the Federal Special Revenue Fund Group, the State Highway Safety Fund Group, and the State Special Revenue Fund Group.
- **AMBER Alert Advisory Committee.** The bill creates the AMBER Alert Advisory Committee, consisting of at least 11 members to be appointed by the Governor. Members of the committee will serve without compensation. As of this writing, it does not appear that the operating expenses associated with the committee will create any significant ongoing costs for the state.

Local Fiscal Highlights

| LOCAL GOVERNMENT | FY 2002 | FY 2003 | FUTURE YEARS |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Counties, Municipalities, and Townships | | | |
| Revenues | - 0 - | - 0 - | - 0 - |
| Expenditures | Minimal increase | Minimal increase | Minimal increase |

Note: For most local governments, the fiscal year is the calendar year. The school district fiscal year is July 1 through June 30.

- **Local law enforcement.** Local fiscal effects on law enforcement are likely to consist of at least the following: (1) a software package for efficient processing and distribution of information regarding abductions, and (2) training for law enforcement personnel. The annual cost associated with these expenditures appears unlikely to exceed minimal for any given local law enforcement entity.

Detailed Fiscal Analysis

Key fiscal provisions of the bill

From a fiscal perspective, the bill has the following three key components:

- (1) Creates a statewide emergency alert program to aid in the identification and location of abducted children.
- (2) Creates the AMBER Alert Advisory Committee to advise various state and law enforcement agencies on an ongoing basis on the implementation, operation, improvement, and evaluation of the statewide emergency alert program.
- (3) Declares an emergency.

Fiscal overview

At this time, a precise estimate of the bill's fiscal effects on the state and local governments, in particular local law enforcement agencies, is difficult to calculate because the nature and magnitude of many of the costs may not become apparent until after the creation and implementation of a statewide child abduction emergency alert program. Thus, this fiscal analysis traces the bill's associated costs in rather broad terms and should be considered somewhat speculative, as it is drawn from the experiences of other states and regions with similar programs as well as the expressed intentions of the Department of Public Safety.

Based on LSC fiscal staff's research to date, it appears that the major cost involved in developing a statewide child abduction emergency alert program, frequently referred to as an AMBER plan, occurs during the start-up phase. There will also be some ongoing state and local government costs incurred in order to ensure that the program can be readily activated, as well as potential costs should the plan actually require activation.

It is unclear precisely how many incidents in Ohio would qualify for activation under an AMBER plan, especially under circumstances where the alleged abductor is a parent. While parent abductions are somewhat common, it is unknown at this time, how many of those parent abductions would involve situations where the parent would be considered a threat to the child. Stranger abductions would clearly qualify for an alert under an AMBER plan. Since stranger-perpetrated abductions, however, are believed to be only about one percent of all child abductions in this country, activation of such a plan in Ohio appears likely to be infrequent.

Based on experiences of other states and regions that have adopted AMBER plans, it appears that child abduction emergency alert programs are generally inexpensive to implement mainly because they typically use existing resources. In these other states and regions with AMBER plans, existing resources usually include the use of emergency broadcast systems most often used for disseminating information on weather emergencies. Organizers of these AMBER plans have sought and received the cooperation of local media outlets to broadcast information on abductions. A further resource, which was utilized most notably in an August 2002 abduction of two teenage girls in California, is highway changeable text message signs. These were originally developed for providing drivers with warnings about traffic delays, such as construction or accidents, but have been used to display information on abduction situations.

Local fiscal effects

Local fiscal effects on law enforcement are likely to consist of at least the following: (1) a software package for efficient processing and distribution of information regarding abductions, and (2) training for law enforcement personnel.

Software. A number of software packages exist that local law enforcement agencies may obtain to assist them if and when such an abduction should take place. The software allows local law enforcement to largely automate the process of notifying other agencies, state officials, and media outlets in the event that an abduction occurs. Software packages vary greatly in price from as little as \$250 to as much as \$6,500. It will probably be necessary for at least each of Ohio's counties to have one of these software packages. Some larger city jurisdictions may also opt to obtain their own copies of the software packages. The total cost of the least expensive software package for use in all 88 counties, which also appears to be the most likely software package chosen for use in Ohio, would be \$22,000.

Training. The implementation of an AMBER plan would undoubtedly require some training for local law enforcement, but in-service training is already an ongoing annual expense for any law enforcement agency. LSC fiscal staff does not anticipate that the AMBER plan would require special or unusual training that would create new or exceptional costs for local law enforcement agencies.

State fiscal effects

The two state entities that would most likely experience any notable fiscal effects from the bill will be the Office of the Attorney General and the Department of Public Safety, as it appears that these two state agencies would play a lead role in developing, implementing, and subsequently coordinating the state's involvement in the statewide emergency alert program. At this time, it does not appear that the burdens associated with the bill will create more than minimal ongoing annual costs. How these two state agencies might cover those ongoing annual costs is uncertain. Presumably, these two state agencies could draw on moneys from any number of their respective funding streams, including the General Revenue Fund, the General Services Fund Group, the Federal Special Revenue Fund Group, the State Highway Safety Fund Group, and the State Special Revenue Fund Group.

The bill also creates the AMBER Alert Advisory Committee, consisting of at least 11 members to be appointed by the Governor. The committee's purpose is to advise the state and law enforcement agencies on an ongoing basis on the implementation, operation, improvement, and

evaluation of the statewide emergency alert program. Members of the committee will serve without compensation. As of this writing, it does not appear that the operating expenses associated with the committee will create any significant ongoing costs for the state.

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