

Office of the County Auditor Auditor's Analysis

Council Bill No. 45-2023

Introduced: November 6, 2023

Auditor: Rebecca Gold

Fiscal Impact:

Based on estimated costs provided by the Deputy Director of the Health Department (the Deputy), we estimate that this legislation will result in approximately \$42,000 in initial operating expenses and up to approximately \$200,000 in annual operating expenses. Per the County's Health Officer, these expenses will need to be funded through an increase in the Health Department's annual County appropriation.

The Deputy indicated implementation of the legislation will result in the following:

- Hiring of up to two licensed environmental health specialists or licensed nutritionists/dietitians for enforcement and annual inspections at a cost (salary and benefits) of approximately \$100,000 per employee
- Adjusting the current environmental health database and creating necessary inspection report(s) at a projected one-time expense of up to \$12,000
- Purchasing a vehicle to travel and conduct inspections at an approximate initial expense of \$30,000

There may be revenues associated with this legislation if noncompliance results in fines being assessed. These revenues cannot be estimated as, according to the Deputy, the Health Department is not able to anticipate the number of violations that may occur. Revenues collected from citations will be applied to the County's General Fund.

Purpose:

Council Bill 45-2023 requires restaurants operating in Howard County to offer at least two healthy children's meal options (in effect on July 1, 2025), as well as requiring that children's meals include a healthy default beverage (in effect on January 1, 2025). The legislation also requires educational outreach and enforcement efforts by the Health Department to confirm restaurant compliance.

Other Comments:

Similar legislation has been passed in Prince George's County and Montgomery County. For comparison purposes, we reached out to their respective Health Departments to see how implementation of the similar legislation has impacted their revenues and expenditures. *As of November 9, 2023, we are awaiting their responses.*