

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 4632

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

DATED: DECEMBER 7, 2020

SUMMARY

Synopsis: Requires MVC to provide written knowledge examination online during COVID-19 public health emergency and state of emergency.

Type of Impact: Increased State Cost.

Agencies Affected: New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	<u>Duration of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency</u>
State Cost Increase	Indeterminate

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates that the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) will incur indeterminate increased costs initially to develop a secure online testing platform on the MVC website, and then ongoing costs for the duration of the pandemic to administer tests online.
- It is not clear whether the provision of online knowledge tests will allow the MVC to reduce its allocation of staff resources at physical agencies to administer in-person knowledge tests. Such a reduction could offset any ongoing staff costs to administer the online exams.
- The cost of developing an online exam that can be hosted on the MVC website is not clear, due to a lack of information about the MVC’s internal capacity to develop an online testing system on its website, or the types of security or anti-cheating measures that the MVC will determine are necessary for the exam. Such measures could increase the complexity and cost of developing the online test.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill requires the MVC to provide the written driver’s license knowledge examination on a secure Internet website during the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health

emergency and state of emergency and for 30 days after the termination of the COVID-19 public health emergency and state of emergency.

The bill requires the commission to allow an applicant for a special learner's permit or examination permit to complete the written driver's license knowledge examination through a secure Internet website operated by the commission.

An applicant who is 18 years of age or older and the parent or guardian of an applicant who is under 18 years of age are required to certify that the applicant did not utilize any reference materials, including but not limited to the New Jersey Driver's Manual, or receive assistance from another individual while completing the online written driver's license knowledge examination. A parent or guardian of an applicant who is under 18 years of age is also required to certify that the parent or guardian was present but did not provide assistance while the applicant completed the online examination.

The provisions of the bill are to expire on the 31st day following the rescission by the Governor of Executive Order No. 103 of 2020 and any subsequent executive orders extending the public health emergency, or on the 31st day following the termination in any other manner of the declared state of emergency and public health emergency.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS estimates that the MVC will incur indeterminate increased costs initially to develop a secure online testing platform on the MVC website, and then ongoing costs for the duration of the pandemic to administer tests online.

The cost of developing an online exam that can be hosted on the MVC website is not clear, due to a lack of information about the MVC's internal capacity to develop an online testing system on its website. The MVC will have discretion in determining the specific format of the online test. A basic test could be developed at a very low cost, but the MVC will need to make the test secure and include anti-cheating measures that will increase the cost. For instance, the test could require a person to connect to a camera so that a staff member can remotely observe them taking the test, which could be complex to program and costly to administer. Such measures could increase the complexity and cost of developing the online test. The OLS is unable to identify a specific cost to develop the test due to a lack of knowledge about what security measures and other design choices the MVC will ultimately make in designing the test.

The agency will likely have ongoing online exam costs to score and evaluate the online tests. There may also be staff costs to verify the certifications of parents and guardians, and to monitor the exam system. If the MVC includes other anti-cheating measures, those may also require staff time and effort to actively monitor.

Once the online test begins being administered, those who opt in to an online test will not be going into an agency for the in-person knowledge exam. If there is a high level of online adoption, some locations may be able to reduce staffing for in-person exams. This reduction could offset any ongoing staff costs to administer the online exams. If there is a relatively low level of adoption, there may be a need to fully staff in-person agencies while also dedicating

staff to administer the online system. As a result, the magnitude of ongoing exam costs cannot be determined.

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).