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BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Fiscal Agency

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Senate Bill 394 (as enrolled)

PUBLIC ACT 424 OF 1988

Sponsor: Senator Gilbert J. DiNello

Senate Committee: Regulatory Affairs

House Committee: Agriculture and Forestry

Date Completed: 1-28-89

RATIONALE

For years small turtles sold as pets were frequently found to carry salmonellosis, sometimes infecting young children with the bacteria. The Michigan Department of Public Health estimated that these small turtles were responsible for 18% of salmonellosis occurring in children up to 10 years of age during the 1970s, before a 1975 Federal order limiting the sale of turtles was passed. Some feel that a loophole in the Federal order exists, allowing small turtles to be sold to households for "educational purposes". It has been argued that additional measures are needed to protect children from exposure to these potentially health threatening turtles.

CONTENT

The bill would create a new act to prohibit the sale or distribution of turtles with shells less than four inches in length, or "viable" turtle eggs, unless the purchaser was provided with a health advisory sheet produced by the Department of Agriculture. The bill requires the Department to publish and make available a health advisory sheet describing the potential health risk, to children and adults, of contracting salmonellosis from turtles. Violation of the bill would be a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of \$1,000, imprisonment for up to 90 days, or both.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would result in minimal cost to the State to send the necessary information to pet store owners and operators. There would be no cost to local units.

ARGUMENTSSupporting Argument

Despite the Federal order limiting sales of turtles, there have been instances in the State of turtles being sold and children being infected with salmonella bacteria in recent years, causing severe illness. Small turtles that are sold to or owned by young children represent a serious

health hazard, as no one yet has found a way to guarantee that turtles are free of salmonella bacteria. The bill would require that persons who purchase turtles be informed of the potential dangers.

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