

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2011 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 475

(Senator Benson)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Economic Matters

Business Occupations - Plumbers and Gas Fitters - Apprentice License Renewal

This bill specifies that the State Board of Plumbing may not renew an apprentice plumber license or an apprentice natural gas fitter's license for more than three consecutive terms if the licensee has not taken or registered to take the journey plumber or journeyman natural gas fitters examination. This provision applies prospectively to apprentice plumbers or apprentice natural gas fitters issued an initial license on or after October 1, 2011. However, an apprentice license may be renewed for an additional two-year term each time the licensee fails a journey examination, regardless of the date of initial licensure.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Under the bill, an apprentice licensee who becomes licensed on or after October 1, 2011, may not renew an apprentice license more than three times without taking or registering to take the journey plumber or journeyman natural gas fitters examination. Thus, because licenses are issued on a two-year basis, the bill does not impact State operations or finances until FY 2018. Beginning in FY 2018, general fund revenues increase minimally due to a net increase in licensing fees as some apprentice plumbers pass the journey exam and pay a higher fee to the State Board of Plumbing. Any increase may be partially offset by lost fee revenue due to some apprentices choosing to leave the industry rather than take the journey licensing exam. Expenditures are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None prior to FY 2018. Beginning in FY 2018, the plumbing and gas fitting industries may be affected minimally.

Analysis

Current Law: The State Board of Plumbing is housed within the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation's (DLLR) Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing. The board has three statutorily established purposes: (1) to protect the integrity of the potable water supply; (2) to provide for the efficient and safe discharge of storm drainage and sanitary drainage; and (3) to ensure that qualified individuals carry out the board's charge.

Under State law, the board regulates the plumbing industry throughout most of Maryland, but lacks jurisdiction in Baltimore County as well as in areas of Montgomery and Prince George's counties under the jurisdiction of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission. The licenses issued by the board are not valid in these jurisdictions.

To provide plumbing services throughout most of the State, a person must be licensed by the board. The board issues three different plumbing licenses: master, journey, and apprentice. These licenses are typically held in conjunction with the equivalent gas fitters license. Journey plumbers and journeyman natural gas fitters are licensed to provide plumbing services while under the direction and control of a master plumber. Apprentice plumbers or gas fitters must have at least four years of experience and at least 7,500 hours under the direction and control of a master plumber or natural gas fitter to qualify to sit for the journey examination. No provision of law exists restricting the number of times an apprentice license may be renewed. Licenses are valid for two years and are issued on a staggered basis.

Background: Under the bill, a new apprentice licensee may not hold such a license for more than six consecutive years without taking (or registering to take) the journey level examination. If an apprentice licensee passes the exam, the individual may graduate to journey status. An apprentice licensee may renew the apprentice license for an additional two-year term if the licensee fails the exam. Master, journey, and apprentice plumbers and natural gas fitters must pay license fees of \$70, \$35, and \$15, respectively. The fee for an examination is \$65; examination fees are paid to the third-party exam administrator and are established to only cover the cost of administering the exam.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None; however, HB 1184 of 2010, which contained similar provisions, received an unfavorable report from the House Economic Matters Committee.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation; Department of Legislative Services

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