

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 85
Economic Matters

(Delegate Impallaria, *et al.*)

Harford County - Alcoholic Beverages - Inspectors

This bill prohibits alcoholic beverages inspectors in Harford County from (1) inspecting any property of a license holder that is subject to an inspection by a county agency that issues a permit required to be obtained by the license holder, or (2) imposing a fine on a license holder for refusing to cooperate with an inspection. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect Harford County finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: The Harford County Board of License Commissioners must employ one full-time chief inspector and as many other inspectors as the board determines are required. The Sheriff, a deputy sheriff, or a municipal peace officer in the county may not be appointed or serve as the chief inspector or as an inspector. The chief inspector must have had investigative experiences as (1) a police officer; (2) an inspector for a governmental unit; or (3) an investigator for a private agency.

With approval of the board, the chief inspector may contract with or hire an independent accounting firm to audit the books and accounts of any license holder.

The chief inspector may be discharged only for cause involving conduct such as dishonesty. Before a chief inspector is discharged, the chief inspector must be given a list of the charges against the chief inspector and an opportunity to reply to the charges in a public hearing in person or by counsel.

The board may establish reasonable compensation for the chief inspector and any other inspector and, when warranted by their respective duties, change their compensation.

Inspectors may serve summonses and issue civil citations, as specified.

Background: In fiscal 2019, there were 201 alcoholic beverages licenses issued in Harford County.

Harford County advises that liquor inspectors do not impose fines in the county. Rather, the inspector writes violations and those violations may or may not result in show cause hearings. The liquor inspector gives licensees the opportunity to cure the violation in most circumstances. If the violation was not corrected, a violation report would be generated and a show cause order would be issued. In 2018 and 2019, there were a total of six violations written for failure to cooperate in the county.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Harford County; Comptroller's Office; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 11, 2020
mr/tso

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