

Department of Legislative Services  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
 First Reader

Senate Bill 942 (Senator Benson, *et al.*)  
 Judicial Proceedings

Health and Wellness Standards - Correctional Facilities

This bill requires the Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services, with the advice of the Secretary of Health, to update the minimum mandatory standards for inmate food services by January 1, 2024, and at least every five years thereafter. The bill also establishes a Correctional Facilities Health and Wellness Pilot Program, the stated purpose of which is to establish minimum mandatory standards for inmate food services, as specified. The Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services must designate four State correctional facilities to participate in the pilot program and, by October 1, 2025, report specified information to the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities and the General Assembly. The Secretary of Health must set health and wellness standards for the pilot program. **The pilot program terminates September 30, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures increase by \$49,700 in FY 2024 and by \$13,600 in FY 2025 for the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to adopt the standards. General fund expenditures increase minimally for the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) in FY 2024 through 2026 to implement the pilot program. General fund revenues may decrease minimally in FY 2024 through 2026.

(in dollars)	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
GF Revenue	(-)	(-)	(-)	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	\$49,700	\$13,600	-	\$0	\$0
Net Effect	(-)	(-)	(-)	\$0	\$0

*Note: (-) = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease*

**Local Effect:** Potential minimal increase in expenditures for local correctional facilities, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

## Analysis

### **Bill Summary:**

#### *Standards for Inmate Food Services*

The minimum mandatory standards for inmate food services must (1) include a procedure for an inmate to elect to change food or beverage options, without requiring a religious or medical exception, to kosher, halal, diabetic, or any other diet available to an inmate and (2) require an inmate to provide adequate notice of any dietary requirements.

An election to change food and beverage options or a notice of dietary requirements must remain valid for six months and be renewed automatically unless the inmate provides additional notice, in writing, of a change to the inmate's diet.

#### *Correctional Facilities Health and Wellness Pilot Program*

Each correctional facility participating in the pilot program must (1) comply with health and wellness standards set by the Secretary of Health; (2) offer plant-based meal, food, and beverage options for general consumption, as specified; (3) provide information and resources to health care providers who provide services in the correctional facility on available training and board certification, as specified; (4) provide information to all inmates on the benefits and availability of plant-based meal, food, and beverage options; (5) establish guidelines that increase the availability of plant-based options in alternative food locations in the facility; and (6) establish guidelines for the preparation of plant-based meal options by the facility that consider the taste preferences of the population served, as specified.

#### *Funding to Develop and Implement the Health and Wellness Standards*

The bill expresses the intent of the General Assembly that the health and wellness standards developed by MDH and implemented by DPSCS under the pilot program must be developed, adopted, and implemented using the department's existing resources.

#### *Application to Existing and Future Contracts*

The requirements that a facility offer plant-based meal, food, and beverage options on request at each meal under the pilot program apply to (1) food and beverage contracts entered into or renewed by a facility on or after October 1, 2023, and (2) a contract, an agreement, or any other arrangement between a correctional facility and a food and beverage contractor entered into on or before that date if the standards can be implemented

without an increase of the price for the food or food services or the appropriate local agency approves any price increase that would result from the implementation of the standards.

**Current Law:** The Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services is required to adopt regulations that establish minimum mandatory standards applicable to, among other things, inmate food services. The minimum mandatory standards apply to all State and local correctional facilities. The Secretary is also required to establish approved standards applicable to, among other things, training; the approved standards apply to all State correctional facilities and may be adopted by a local correctional facility. The standards adopted under these provisions must be consistent with federal and State law.

By regulation, the managing official of a correctional facility is responsible for having written policies and procedures, including (1) providing for a menu approved annually by a registered dietitian; (2) ensuring that three meals a day are served with not more than a 14-hour interval between the evening meal and breakfast; and (3) ensuring that the food service operation is licensed and meets State sanitation and health regulations as verified by inspection as required by the health department.

**State Fiscal Effect:** Although the bill establishes the intent of the General Assembly that the health and wellness standards developed by MDH and implemented by DPSCS under the pilot program must be developed, adopted, and implemented using existing resources, initial implementation likely results in a minimal increase in general fund expenditures for both MDH and DPSCS. Without actual experience under the bill, it is unclear to what extent health care costs and/or food costs may decrease over time as a result of the bill.

#### *Maryland Department of Health*

MDH advises that it needs one registered dietitian in fiscal 2024 to develop the dietary guidelines and one part-time permanent staff beginning in fiscal 2025 to handle the ongoing responsibilities of the bill. The Department of Legislative Services disagrees and advises that MDH must develop the standards for implementation by January 1, 2024, but there are no ongoing requirements for developing the standards.

Thus, MDH general fund expenditures increase by \$49,716 in fiscal 2024, which accounts for the bill's October 1, 2023 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one contractual registered dietitian to review and provide advice for the development of dietary guidelines for one year. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Contractual Position	1.0
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$42,307
Operating Expenses	<u>7,409</u>
<b>Total FY 2024 MDH Expenditures</b>	<b>\$49,716</b>

Future year expenditures reflect a full salary with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses and termination of the contractual position after the first quarter of fiscal 2025.

This estimate does not include any health insurance costs that could be incurred for specified contractual employees under the State’s implementation of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

*Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services*

DPSCS advises that, in order to update the minimum mandatory standards for inmate food services by January 1, 2024 (and at least every five years thereafter), it needs to redirect staff time to develop the standards and either amend or promulgate regulations to align with the newly developed standards. While this is an operational impact for DPSCS, it can likely be absorbed within existing budgeted resources.

DPSCS further advises that until the Secretary of Health develops the standards for the pilot program, the bill’s effect on DPSCS expenditures relating to inmate food services cannot be reliably estimated. DPSCS currently provides vegetarian meal plans on a daily basis as well as plant-based meal options to regular diet inmates on four out of the five weekly menu cycles. DPSCS advises that providing a plant-based meal on the fifth weekly menu cycle increases costs by up to \$0.65 per meal. Under the bill – for four State correctional facilities participating in the pilot program – DPSCS must provide at least one plant-based meal option and at least one plant-based beverage to all inmates at each meal at least one day each week. In fiscal 2022, the annual average daily population for the Division of Correction was 17,025 inmates spread out across 18 prisons and pre-release centers. *For illustrative purposes only*, assuming an increase of 10.4 additional plant-based meals offered annually to approximately 3,783 inmates across four State correctional facilities at an increased cost of \$0.65 per meal, general fund expenditures could increase by approximately \$25,574 annually during the two years of the pilot program. To the extent that the pilot program is extended beyond two years and/or expanded to additional correctional facilities, general fund expenditures increase beyond fiscal 2026.

State revenues may also be affected. According to DPSCS, a decrease in the purchase of meat-based products by State facilities may result in a decrease in revenues for the food processing plant in the Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE). MCE operates as a

self-supporting agency within DPSCS that includes a food processing plant. Nearly all products produced by MCE's food processing plant are meat-based products. Without actual experience under the bill, any reduction in revenues for MCE cannot be quantified. Even so, any impact on general fund revenues is anticipated to be minimal.

**Local Expenditures:** The bill applies the health and wellness standards developed under the pilot program to a contract, agreement, or other arrangement between a correctional facility and a food and beverage contractor entered into on or before October 1, 2023, if (1) the standards can be implemented without an increase of the price for the food or food services or (2) the appropriate local government agency approves any such price increase. Therefore, expenditures for local correctional facilities may increase to the extent local correctional facilities implement the standards. However, any increase is expected to be minimal.

**Additional Comments:** The applicability of the health and wellness standards established under the pilot program is unclear. Uncodified language in Section 4 applies standards to contracts for correctional facilities such that they can be implemented without additional cost or any price increase is approved by the local government. This appears to apply the bill's standards to *all* State and local correctional facilities if they can be implemented at no cost, even though the pilot program only requires four State correctional facilities to implement the standards.

---

### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 1352 of 2022; HB 1071 and SB 322 of 2021; and HB 819 and SB 768 of 2020.

**Designated Cross File:** HB 59 (Delegate Hill) - Health and Government Operations and Judiciary.

**Information Source(s):** Caroline and Prince George's counties; Maryland Association of Counties; City of Annapolis; Maryland Municipal League; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Juvenile Services; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 15, 2023  
js/jc

---

Analysis by: Amber R. Gundlach

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510