

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 55

(Delegate Pruski, et al.)

Health and Government Operations

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Maryland Commission on Veterans and Military Families

This bill establishes the Maryland Commission on Veterans and Military Families, staffed by the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA). The commission must (1) study and make recommendations for developing and implementing a statewide strategic plan to make Maryland the best state for veterans and military families, including legislative and budgetary recommendations; (2) consult with the Office of Military and Federal Affairs and the Maryland Military Installation Council in the Department of Commerce; and (3) identify key performance indicators to assess the quality of life for veterans and military families in Maryland relative to other states. By December 1, 2024, the commission must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly. A member of the commission may not receive compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses. The bill takes effect June 1, 2024, and terminates June 30, 2025.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: No effect in FY 2024. MDVA general fund expenditures increase by \$74,200 in FY 2025 only for contractual support to staff the commission and complete the required report. Expense reimbursements for commission members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources. No effect on revenues.

Table with 6 columns: (in dollars), FY 2024, FY 2025, FY 2026, FY 2027, FY 2028. Rows include Revenues, GF Expenditure, and Net Effect.

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

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local government operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: MDVA delivers services and programs to assist Maryland veterans, their families, and survivors in obtaining State, federal, and local benefits provided by law in recognition for their service. MDVA assures the quality maintenance of veterans' cemeteries and memorials to honor Maryland veterans. MDVA also manages Charlotte Hall Veterans Home, an assisted living and skilled nursing facility for veterans and their eligible spouses who are unable to care for themselves due to disability, advancing age, or who require nursing home care. Additionally, MDVA engages in public awareness and outreach to veterans, their families, and other stakeholders.

The Maryland Veterans Commission advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on all matters pertaining to veterans' issues. The commission, consisting of 29 voting members and honorary nonvoting members, meets quarterly. MDVA provides staff for the commission.

State Expenditures: MDVA advises that the department is unable to absorb additional duties and has determined that one temporary contractual staff member is needed to implement the bill. The Department of Legislative Services concurs.

Thus, MDVA general fund expenditures increase by \$74,237 in fiscal 2025, which accounts for a 30-day start-up delay from the bill's June 1, 2024 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one contractual administrative officer to staff the commission and produce the mandatory report, which includes identifying key performance indicators to compare quality of life for veterans and military families in Maryland relative to other states. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and operating expenses.

Contractual Position	1.0
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$66,711
Operating Expenses	<u>7,526</u>
Total FY 2025 State Expenditures	\$74,237

This estimate assumes that the contractual position is eliminated June 30, 2025, concurrent with the termination of the commission. To the extent that the commission is able to complete its work and submit its required report by December 1, 2024 (within six months of the bill's effective date), the contractual position may terminate earlier, and expenditures may be reduced.

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.

The Department of Commerce advises that the Office of Military and Federal Affairs and the Maryland Military Installation Council can consult with the commission within existing resources.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: SB 88 (Senator Gile, *et al.*) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs; Department of Commerce; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 16, 2024
km/jc Third Reader - March 13, 2024
Revised - Amendment(s) - March 13, 2024

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