

LBH LOS-Senate Bill 248- Department of Service and

Uploaded by: Jennifer Witten

Position: FAV



Date: January 20, 2024

To: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Reference: Senate Bill 248- Department of Service and Civic Innovation - Maryland Corps Program Service Year Option Pathways - Revisions

Position: Letter of Support

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members,

On behalf of LifeBridge Health, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on SB248. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center; Levindale Hebrew Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County; Grace Medical Center (formerly Bon Secours Hospital), a freestanding medical facility in West Baltimore; and Center for Hope a center of excellence focused on provided hope and services for trauma survivors in Baltimore City.

Career exploration, positive reinforcement, mentorship, and paid internships can lead to further opportunities for advancement. Establishing career and education pipelines with youth and community members support pathways to meaningful opportunities that is critical to ensuring we are cultivating a future workforce. These programs benefit the participants and the sponsoring organizations. LifeBridge Health offers apprenticeship programs to help people gain job readiness skills and experience. These programs include paid internships, job readiness training, and career assessment.

LifeBridge Health was selected as an approved site to participate in the Maryland Corps Program.

- We hired two recent high school graduates who are residents of Baltimore City and Baltimore County into existing jobs,
- Participants were integrated into the culture of our organization and partnered with learners who are driven to see participants succeed in the program,
- Provided wrap-around supports from program (success coaches, companion online learning, monthly in person sessions with cohorts of other members).

With the expansion of the program, we would kindly recommend the Administration consider slight modifications to the program to improve on overall process. This legislation does not address those issues, however as we expand eligibility, we do anticipate bringing on more participants in the future.

We would recommend streamlined communication, one point of contact, more timely grant agreements, and alignment of host organization policies within the program. We are extremely proud to be a part of the growing opportunities for young people while building foundational workforce members.

CARE BRAVELY

We thank the Committee for the consideration. We support Governor Moore and his administration in creating programs like the Maryland Corps Service Year Program to expand and engage eager and qualified participants, for that we request a favorable vote for SB248.

For more information, please contact:

Jennifer Witten, M.B.A.

Vice President, Government Relations & Community Development

jwitten2@lifebridgedhealth.org

Mobile: 505-688-3495

Ches Bay Trust Testimony - SB248.pdf

Uploaded by: Kacey Wetzel

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 248
Department of Service and Civic Innovation - Maryland Corps Program Service Year
Option Pathways – Revisions
Written Testimony

Date: January 22, 2025

Submitted to: Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Submitted by: Kacey Wetzel, Vice President of Outreach and Education

The Chesapeake Bay Trust (Trust) supports the revisions to the Department of Service and Civic Innovation’s (DSCI) Maryland Corps Program Service Year Option Pathways as outlined in Senate Bill 248. The Trust currently plays a key role in administering the climate-focused placements for young adults through the Service Year Option, as part of our Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps. The proposed revisions to DSCI’s Service Year Option Pathways will better align the program with the Trust’s existing Conservation and Climate Corps, particularly by modifying certain qualifications for applicants and adjusting compensation structures for participants in both the Young Adult Service Year Option Pathway and the Maryland Service Year Option Pathway. These revisions will facilitate greater alignment and collaboration between the programs. Coordinating in this way will allow a one-stop-shop application experience for young people interested in climate service and host organizations interested in mentoring these young people. This partnership can help Maryland corps reach its goal of 2,000 young adult corps participants per year most efficiently by leveraging ongoing corps work through the Trust.

Background on the Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps

The Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps places young people ages 18-25 in year-long, stipend-supported terms of service at host not-for-profit entities across the region. The Corps was established by the Maryland General Assembly in 2010, first proposed by Senate President Mike Miller, and expanded under the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022. Corps members:

- 1) work on a project to advance their Host Organizations’ missions in the realms of watershed restoration, energy conservation, climate, climate justice, agriculture, and K-12 environmental education (expanding their Host Organizations’ capacity),
- 2) receive life and career skills training, and
- 3) learn to lead their own independent projects (including developing budgets and managing grants).

Host Organizations include environmental and non-environmental entities (e.g., faith institutions, local governments, school systems, civic associations with social missions, etc.) alike.

In its first 15 years, 428 alums have completed the Conservation Corps



program. Thirty percent of Corps members are generally immediately hired by their Host Organizations or another host in the program, many into new jobs that were made possible by the expanded capacity at the Host Organization driven by the Corps member's service. Hundreds of organizations have served as Host Organizations, many of which expanded in size during this period and have filled their staffs with Corps alums.



Over the 15 years of the Corps, members have planted 10,000 trees and 30,000 native plants and engaged 40,000 students and volunteers as part of their 400+ individual capstone projects.

From 2010 to 2023, the Corps was supported only by the Chesapeake Bay Trust's unrestricted revenue (mostly Chesapeake vehicle license plate and tax checkoff funds), a mandated contribution from Maryland DNR, and voluntary contributions from the National Park Service, BGE, and others. For FY24, your committee approved an additional \$1.5 million mandated in the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, which also required an increase in the members' stipends, allowing an expansion of the Corps from 33 members to 50+ members.

Demand for the Chesapeake Conservation Corps has to date exceeded available resources by about double. Last year (2024-2025 Corps year), 145 prospective Corps members applied to serve, and 112 not-for-profit entities applied as hosts. For the 2025-2026 Corps class supported by this appropriation, 124 entities applied to serve as hosts with the member deadline in March.

More recently, the Trust has been working with the Governor's new Department of Service and Civic Innovation, which is managing the new Service Year and Maryland Corps programs. As noted above, the Trust has been supporting the administration of the climate placements for the Service Year option. Our goal is to continue to coordinate to offer young people seamless Climate Corps opportunities.

More information about the Corps can be found at www.cbtrust.org/corps.

About the Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Trust was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1985 as a nonprofit grant-making organization with a goal to increase stewardship and engagement in the restoration of the state's local rivers, streams, parks, and other natural resources in diverse communities across the state, from the mountains of Western Maryland and the Youghiogheny watershed to the marshes of the Coastal Bays. The goal was to create an entity that could complement state agency work with groups on the ground: schools, nonprofit organizations, faith-based and reach large institutions, homeowners associations, community and civic associations, and other types of groups.

The Trust invests in local communities and watersheds through grant programs and special initiatives and is known for its efficiency, putting on average 90 cents of every dollar into programs. The Trust has awarded over \$200 million through more than 12,500 grants and projects in every county in Maryland since 1985 (www.cbtrust.org/impact). We make about 450 grants and other awards a year and have about 1,000 active grantees at any one time.

The Trust does not receive a direct state appropriation to support its operations, instead supported through revenue from the Chesapeake Bay vehicle license plate; half of the Chesapeake and Endangered Species Fund checkoff on the state income tax form; two new donation options through Maryland's online

boating, fishing, hunting license system, one that focuses on veterans' rehabilitation; partnerships with federal, state, local agencies, family foundations, and corporate foundations; and individual donors.

Due to its efficiency, the Trust has been rated with the maximum four-star rating by the nation's leading charity evaluator, Charity Navigator, for more than two decades, putting it in the top 1% of non-profits in the nation.

One of the Trust's basic tenets in its strategic plan is to engage under-engaged audiences in natural resources issues, and that theme characterizes all the Trust's programs, including the Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps. Every individual in our area benefits from healthy natural resources, and in turn, every individual can help natural resources.

DSCI SB248 Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Meghan Music

Position: FAV

January 22, 2025

The Honorable Brian Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and the Honorable Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

The Department of Service and Civic Innovation respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 248 - Department of Service and Civic Innovation - Maryland Corps Program Service Year Option Pathways - Revisions.

SB0248 is the first departmental bill since the Department of Service and Civic Innovation (DSCI) creation in 2023. It reflects the lessons learned from launching and operationalizing our first two classes. The proposed changes address technical and operational improvements to enhance program efficiency, participant experience, and long-term sustainability. SB0248 has no fiscal note and will create operational and financial efficiencies.

This legislation represents a necessary step forward in ensuring the continued success and growth of the Maryland Corps and Service Year Option pathways; both provide invaluable opportunities for Marylanders to engage in service, gain workforce experience, and contribute to the state's communities.

The SERVE Act established two pathways as part of the Maryland Corps Program: the Maryland Service Year Option Pathway (Maryland Corps) and the Young Adult Service Year Option Pathway (Service Year Option). Five key operational changes and three minor technical changes are proposed.

Consolidation of the Program Fund: SB0248 would merge the two budget line items (Maryland Service Year Option Pathway Fund and the Young Adult Service Year Option Pathway Fund) into a single "Program Fund." This would allow the Department to avoid requesting additional General Funds to account for the growth in the Young Adult Service Option Pathway while still supporting the Maryland Service Year Option Pathway. This creates operational flexibility and maximizes resource efficiency without increasing the state's financial burden by consolidating funding streams for the Maryland Service Year Option Pathway Fund and the Young Adult Service Year Option Pathway Fund.

Updated Salary Requirements: SB0248 updates minimum wage requirements to the applicable county or State minimum wage, whichever is greater. Linking Member wages to the higher county or state minimum wage ensures fair compensation and keeps pace with legal labor requirements across Maryland. Currently, the Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation already incorporates County differences in minimum wage into Member pay, so this change will not have a fiscal impact.

Expanded Eligibility Young Adult Service Year Option Pathway: Expanding the age range for the Young Adult Service Option Pathway Members to a minimum of 18 years and a maximum of 24 years at the Program's start date broadens access for disconnected youth. Disconnected youth are teenagers and young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school. These youth are also referred to as “opportunity youth” because reconnecting them to work and school has a positive economic and civic impact. In 2022, approximately 57,000 youth aged 18-24 in Maryland were not attending school, not working, and with no degree beyond high school. This will broaden the age eligibility to expand access to the Program based on the Department's demand during the first two years.

In addition, SB0248 maintains the high school diploma requirement but removes the Maryland-specific graduation/diploma requirements. This also will allow new Maryland residents who may have graduated from high school in a different state but meet all other eligibility criteria to qualify for the Program.

Updated Requirement for Maryland Service Year Option Pathway Eligibility: SB0248 will require Maryland Service Year Option Pathway Members to be Maryland residents. Currently, in statute, the Maryland Service Year Option Pathway gives preference to Maryland residents for eligibility but does not require it. Moving the preference to a requirement makes Maryland residency a matching requirement for both Program pathways.

Simplified Completion Award Distribution: After significant consultation with the Maryland 529 Plan, SB0248 removes the requirement that the Department provides the option of the \$6,000 completion award deposited into a tax-exempt Maryland 529 account if desired by Members. It became clear that the Department is not able to award the \$6,000 completion award to be deposited into a 529 account in a way that exempts the award from the Member's federal income tax liability, which is a requirement of 529 Plans.

The Department recognizes the value of the educational benefit the 529 Program provides and has had Maryland 529 come to speak to Members on several occasions during Class One (and will do so again for subsequent classes). Maryland 529 presented information on how to open an account, different portfolios, and how to add to contributions from their completion award or a future paycheck. This proposed change simply reflects the operational limitations in implementing the current requirement—it does not impact its spirit.

Statutory Alignment with Current Operations: This legislation eliminates outdated references, such as the inactive Executive Fellows Program, renaming The Governor's Volunteer

Council to the correct name of the Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism, and formally integrates the Governor's Office of Service and Volunteerism into DSCI, reflecting current operations.

These adjustments are designed to make the Maryland Service Year Option Pathway and the Young Adult Service Year Option Pathway more accessible, equitable, and sustainable. By streamlining operations and removing unnecessary barriers, SB0248 strengthens Maryland's workforce pipeline, supports economic mobility, and reinforces the state's commitment to civic engagement.

For these reasons, the Department of Service and Civic Innovation urges a favorable report on SB0248. Thank you for your time and consideration.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Meghan Music, Legislative Civic Innovation Specialist.

Yours in Service,

Paul Monteiro

Secretary, Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation

GOC SB248 Testimony.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Semeredin Kundin

Position: FAV

January 22, 2025

The Honorable Brian Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and the Honorable members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

The Governor's Office for Children respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 248 - Department of Service and Civic Innovation - Maryland Corps Program Service Year Option Pathways - Revisions.

SB0248 expands the age range for the Young Adult Service Option Pathway Members to a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 24 years at the Program's start date. This expansion aligns with the mission of the Governor's Office for Children, which works to improve the well-being of children, youth, and families across Maryland by addressing poverty, improving support networks, and promoting economic mobility for those with the greatest needs. Amongst these groups is older youth, who face particular challenges as they navigate the transition to adulthood.

At the Governor's Office for Children, we recognize that young people ages 18 to 24 are in a critical period of personal and professional development. Access to meaningful service opportunities can shape their future trajectories. The Young Adult Service Option Pathway provides essential workforce experience, professional skill-building, and pathways to economic independence—factors that directly contribute to long-term stability and success.

Expanding the eligibility age to 24 ensures that more young adults, particularly those who may have delayed postsecondary education or career pathways due to financial, social, or systemic barriers, can engage in service, develop critical skills, and access post-service education and career benefits. This expansion aligns with the interagency approach that underlies the Governor's Office for Children's efforts to build a cohesive network of supports to ensure that children and families in Maryland can thrive. Older youth and young adults, particularly those from high-poverty neighborhoods, can fall between the cracks as they graduate high school, navigate access to the workforce and/or postsecondary education, and strive to become financially independent. The resources available to support these young people shift dramatically as they reach 18 years of age and beyond, leaving them without a sufficient safety net. The Governor's Office for Children therefore strongly supports creating more opportunities for this population, including expanding Service Year eligibility to include them.

Numerous data points illustrate the need for programming like The Young Adult Service Option Pathway in Maryland:

- **Poverty Rates:** In 2023, approximately 11.5 percent, or 143,785, of youth and young adults ages 18 to 34 years were living in poverty in Maryland. This group accounted for 25 percent of all individuals living in poverty at the time. (*American Community Survey 2023 1-year estimates*)
- In 2023, the labor force participation rate for youth and young adults ages 16 to 19 years was 41 percent and 76.3 percent for those 20 to 24 years. Additionally, 14.5 percent of youth and young adults ages 16 to 19 years and 8.6 percent of youth and young adults ages 20 to 24 years, were unemployed, respectively. (*American Community Survey 2023 1-year estimates*)
- In 2022, 57,000 youth aged 18 - 24 were neither in school nor working (Kids Count Report, AECF)

Additionally, broadening eligibility enhances The Young Adult Service Option Pathway's impact by creating a larger pipeline of diverse, service-minded young professionals who will contribute to their communities while preparing for long-term success. This expansion also supports Maryland's workforce and economic development goals by helping more young people secure career pathways that lead to sustained employment.

For these reasons, the Governor's Office for Children strongly supports SB 248 and urges a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carmel Martin

Special Secretary, Governor's Office for Children & Senior Advisor to the Governor, Economic Mobility