

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 942 (Delegate Young)
 Judiciary and Appropriations

Criminal Procedure – Crime Solvers Reward Fund – Establishment

This bill establishes the Crime Solvers Reward Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund in, and administered by, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS). The stated purpose of the fund is to provide grants to law enforcement agencies or county reward programs to issue rewards to individuals who provide “qualifying information” to a law enforcement agency relevant to the investigation of a murder or an attempted murder involving a firearm. DPSCS must adopt implementing regulations and submit a related annual report.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by an estimated \$1.0 million in FY 2025 to capitalize the fund, under the assumptions discussed below; future years reflect continued capitalization. Special fund revenues increase by \$1.0 million annually, reflecting receipt of the capitalization funds; special fund expenditures increase correspondingly to provide grants. DPSCS can administer the fund and adopt regulations with existing staff, as discussed below.

(\$ in millions)	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
SF Revenue	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0
GF Expenditure	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0
SF Expenditure	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0
Net Effect	(\$1.0)	(\$1.0)	(\$1.0)	(\$1.0)	(\$1.0)

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

Local Effect: Local revenues and expenditures increase beginning in FY 2025 to the extent that local jurisdictions apply for and are awarded grants from the fund.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The fund consists of money appropriated in the State budget to the fund, money made available to the fund through federal programs or private contributions, interest earnings of the fund, and any other money from any other source accepted for the benefit of the fund. The fund may only be used to award grants to a law enforcement agency or a county reward program in order for the law enforcement agency or county reward program to provide reward money to individuals who provide a law enforcement agency with qualifying information relevant to the investigation of a murder or an attempted murder involving a firearm.

For an individual to be eligible for a reward from a law enforcement agency or a county reward program, the law enforcement agency or county reward program must establish that the individual (1) provided credible qualifying information; (2) did not directly participate in the crime; and (3) cooperated with the law enforcement agency.

DPSCS must adopt regulations to carry out the bill's provisions; the regulations must include (1) criteria explaining how eligible law enforcement agencies and county reward programs may apply for funding from the fund and (2) criteria for the distribution of available funds.

By October 1, 2025, and each year thereafter, DPSCS must report to the General Assembly on (1) the number of rewards issued by law enforcement agencies and county reward programs in accordance with the bill and (2) the total amount of money provided under the bill.

“Qualifying information” means information provided to a law enforcement agency that directly leads to the identification, arrest, and conviction of the perpetrator of a crime.

Current Law: State law does not contain any provisions establishing a reward for information to solve a crime. However, statutory provisions exist for crime prevention program proposals by nonprofit organizations under the Neighborhood and Community Assistance Program within the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Also, current law requires circuit courts to impose additional court costs of \$45 per case on criminal defendants convicted of a crime. The District Court imposes additional costs of \$35 per case on criminal defendants convicted of a crime. The additional costs are deposited into various funds, including the State Victims of Crime Fund, the Victim and Witness Protection and Relocation Fund, and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund.

State Expenditures:

Crime Solvers Reward Fund – Capitalization

Although the bill does not establish a mandated appropriation to the fund and does not otherwise indicate an intended level of funding for the grant program, this analysis assumes that \$1.0 million annually is needed to operate a viable grant program. Thus, general fund expenditures increase by \$1.0 million annually beginning in fiscal 2025 to capitalize the fund. As funding for the grant program is discretionary, the actual amount appropriated to the fund in any given year may vary from this estimate.

Special fund revenues to and expenditures from the fund increase correspondingly, reflecting receipt of the capitalization funds and spending from the fund to provide grants.

This analysis assumes that general funds are needed to capitalize the fund, as the availability of any funding from federal programs or private contributions, which are also authorized revenue sources for the fund, is unknown. To the extent other sources of funding are available, the need for general funds may decrease.

Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services – Fund Administration

If \$1.0 million annually is appropriated to the fund, and grants commensurate with that amount are awarded, DPSCS can likely administer the fund with existing staff. However, without actual experience under the bill, the exact number of applications submitted and grants awarded cannot be reliably predicted. To the extent that existing staff prove insufficient, DPSCS may request additional resources through the annual budget process.

Local Fiscal Effect: Local revenues and expenditures increase beginning in fiscal 2025 to the extent that local jurisdictions apply for and are awarded grants from the fund. Assuming local law enforcement agencies and county reward programs are the primary grant recipients, based on the anticipated funding available for grant awards (as discussed above), a total of \$1.0 million – across all jurisdictions – is provided in grants each year.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 1044 of 2023.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Montgomery, Talbot, and Wicomico counties; City of College Park; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

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