

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 378 (Delegate Otto, *et al.*)
Health and Government Operations Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Somerset County - Service Award Program for Emergency Medical Services and Fire and Rescue Personnel

This bill authorizes the Somerset County Commissioners to establish and fund a volunteer service award program for qualified members of volunteer fire departments, ambulance companies, and rescue squads.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2015.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Somerset County expenditures increase by \$50,400 in FY 2016 and by \$60,000 in FY 2020. Future year expenditures reflect a 4.5% growth factor. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Somerset County has no specific authority to establish or fund a service award program such as the program specified by the bill. Cecil and Washington counties are authorized to establish and fund a volunteer length of service award program for qualified members of volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, and ambulance corps. Frederick and St. Mary's counties have similar, but more limited, authority. Calvert County is required to administer a length of service award program for members of volunteer fire companies and rescue squads and Charles County must administer a length

of service award program for members of volunteer fire companies, rescue squads, and mobile intensive care units.

Background: Volunteer firefighters and rescue squad members and their surviving family members are entitled to disability and death benefits from the Maryland State Firemen's Association if the firefighter is killed or disabled in the line of duty. The amounts paid are determined by the association, subject to a statutory minimum of \$2,000 for death benefits. The Governor is required to include payments to the association of at least \$55,000 in the annual State budget to help pay for those benefits.

Local Fiscal Effect: Somerset County plans to use the authority granted by the bill to establish a volunteer service award program for individuals aged 62 and older and who have either served 20 years in a volunteer ambulance company or 25 years as a volunteer firefighter. The plan entails a benefit of \$50 per month (\$600 annually) for eligible individuals. Somerset County indicates that 84 individuals would be eligible in the first year of the program, for a total cost of \$50,400. Future year expenditures are expected to increase by approximately 4.5% annually over the subsequent four-year period, resulting in a total cost of approximately \$60,000.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 440 (Senator Mathias) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): Somerset County, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 3, 2014
ncs/hlb

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