

Department of Legislative Services
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FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 556 (Delegate Pendergrass)

Health and Government Operations Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

State Board of Environmental Health Specialists - Revisions

The bill revises the avenues for licensure qualification as an environmental health specialist and required course work. The bill also requires the State Board of Environmental Health Specialists to elect a chairman, vice chairman, and secretary once every two years, rather than annually, and to appoint an executive director. Licensees must notify the board of any address change within 60 days. The bill makes several other procedural changes.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect special fund revenues or expenditures because it is largely procedural in nature and provides clarifying and simplifying amendments to the board's statute. The board can handle the bill's changes with existing resources.

Local Effect: None; however, the bill may increase the candidate pool for local health departments as employers of environmental health specialists by expanding the qualifying degrees and simplifying the educational and training requirements for environmental health specialists.

Small Business Effect: Minimal overall. However, the bill offers flexibility by expanding qualifying degrees and simplifying educational and training requirements for environmental health specialists, which could result in potential savings for small businesses that hire environmental health specialists.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill clarifies licensure qualification and application procedures for environmental health specialists. Applicants must demonstrate qualifications to the satisfaction of the board and successfully pass a required exam. To apply, applicants must submit (1) an official transcript from an accredited college or university and (2) *written* verification from the applicant's employer that the applicant successfully completed an environmental health specialist-in-training (EHSIT) program.

Under current law, there are four qualifying education and training combinations that qualify for licensure as an environmental health specialist. The bill combines two options, and revises the remaining two. Under the bill, there are three options:

Option 1:

Training: 12 months in an EHSIT program and

Education: a bachelor's degree in the *chemical*, physical, biological, or environmental sciences that includes (1) 60 semester credit hours of *chemical*, physical, biological, and environmental sciences, including one lab course in two of the following fields: chemistry, physics, biology, *geographic information systems*, or *soil science* and (2) a course in mathematics.

Option 2:

Training: 24 months in an EHSIT program and

Education: a bachelor's degree in the *chemical*, physical, biological, or environmental sciences that includes (1) 30 semester credit hours of *chemical*, physical, biological, and environmental sciences, including one lab course in two of the following fields: chemistry, physics, biology, *geographic information systems*, or *soil science* and (2) a course in mathematics.

Option 3:

Training: a 3-month internship and

Education: a master's degree in public or environmental health science that includes (1) 30 semester credit hours (45 quarter credit hours) of *chemical*, physical, biological, or environmental sciences, including at least one lab course in two of the following fields: chemistry, physics, biology, *geographic information systems*, or *soil science* and (2) a course in mathematics.

The bill makes several other administrative changes including repealing the requirement that examination papers identify an applicant only by a number assigned by the board secretary and that the board secretary maintain and file examinations for at least a year. The bill also repeals the restriction that consumer members of the board may only participate in examination-related activities with authorization by the board.

The executive director must serve at the pleasure of the board and carry out the powers and duties assigned by the board.

Current Law: The board licenses environmental health specialists and certifies EHSITs, who typically have the required education but not the necessary experience for a license. Board regulations currently establish an EHSIT program, in which a “seasonal employee” may participate under a health specialist-in-training certificate. The board elects a chairman, vice chairman, and secretary annually. There is no specific requirement that the board hire an executive director nor specification of an executive director’s responsibilities, but the board does have an executive director.

To obtain an initial license as an environmental health specialist, an individual must first file an application for licensure with the board, accompanied by (1) an official transcript of the applicant’s baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate studies or other evidence certifying successful completion of course work considered equivalent by the board; (2) verification of the applicant’s relevant previous work experience, if any; and (3) the required application fee. Four possible combinations of education and training can lead to licensure.

Option 1:

Training: 12 months in an EHSIT program and

Education: a bachelor’s degree in environmental health or environmental science.

Option 2:

Training: 12 months in an EHSIT program and

Education: a bachelor’s degree in the physical, biological, or environmental sciences that includes (1) 60 semester credit hours of physical, biological, or environmental sciences, including one lab course in two of the following fields: chemistry, physics, or biology and (2) a course in mathematics.

Option 3:

Training: 24 months in an EHSIT program and

Education: a bachelor’s degree that includes (1) 30 semester credit hours of physical, biological, or environmental sciences, including one lab course in two of the following fields: chemistry, physics, or biology and (2) a course in mathematics.

Option 4:

Training: a 3-month internship and

Education: a master’s degree in public or environmental health science that includes (1) 30 semester credit hours (45 quarter credit hours) of physical, biological, or environmental sciences, including one lab course in two of the following fields: biology, chemistry, or physics and (2) a course in mathematics.

Background: Chapter 667 of 2012 transferred the State Board of Environmental Sanitarians from the Maryland Department of the Environment to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and changed the name of the board to the State Board of Environmental Health Specialists. Environmental health specialists perform inspections and investigations to secure compliance with environmental and health laws and regulations to ensure that people do not become sick because of their environments.

Environmental health specialists' comprehensive responsibilities include inspections, collection and analysis of data, risk assessment, nuisance complaint investigations, education, and emergency response. The diverse practice areas of the profession include food safety; air quality; disease investigation and prevention; animal, insect, and rodent control; and lead, well, septic system, swimming pool, and campground inspections. Most environmental health specialists work for local health departments and State agencies.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland Association of County Health Officers, Department of Legislative Services

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