

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Enrolled - Revised

Senate Bill 606

(Senator Waugh)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Appropriations

Maryland College Collaboration for Student Veterans Commission

This bill establishes the Maryland College Collaboration for Student Veterans Commission in the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA), subject to specified requirements.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MDVA can handle the bill's requirements with existing budgeted resources. The bill does not materially affect higher education expenditures, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Local community college finances and operations are not materially affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: "College Collaboration" means the Maryland College Collaboration for Student Veterans, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the State and Maryland institutions of higher education dated January 31, 2011. The commission must:

- work to ensure the educational success of returning veterans, including their recruitment, successful transition into higher education, retention, and eventual graduation;

- facilitate the sharing of best practices among institutions of higher education and State agencies regarding academic transition programs and support services designed for returning veterans;
- work with institutions of higher education in the State to provide the following services to veterans, as set forth in the College Collaboration: (1) awareness of veteran reintegration challenges; (2) communication and coordination of available veteran services; (3) a designated “one door” office that coordinates veteran services and supports; (4) behavioral health services; (5) financial aid and GI Bill support services; and (6) peer support groups; and
- publish an annual report and any other material the commission considers necessary and submit the annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly.

Current Law/Background: In January 2011, 21 State public institutions of higher education entered into an MOU in which each institution agreed to carry out the tasks generally required of the commission established under the bill. Of that total, 13 were community colleges and 8 were four-year institutions.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) advises that each public institution of higher education and many nonpublic institutions in the State have at least one Veteran’s Affairs (VA) representative (known as a VA School Certifying Official (SCO)). The SCO’s primary role is to assist students using their veterans’ education benefits while completing their degree. Due to limited resources on campus, many of these officials serve a dual role while working in another key student services position. Therefore, the officials are providing counseling to their students, monitoring student progress, and ensuring the students are certified to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for the use of their veterans’ education benefits. The majority of these students are receiving benefit payments to assist with their tuition, housing, books, and supplies. This assistance reduces and potentially eliminates the students’ out-of-pocket costs while completing their degrees.

State Expenditures: MDVA can handle the bill’s requirements with existing budgeted resources. MHEC advises that the institutions that have signed the MOU discussed above have each established a one-door system that combines veteran resources on campus under one office. Combined with the fact that the bill generally codifies requirements in the MOU, higher education expenditures are not materially affected by the bill.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1458 (Delegate P. Young, *et al.*) - Appropriations.

Information Source(s): Maryland Higher Education Commission, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 23, 2016
kb/rhh Revised - Senate Third Reader - March 28, 2016
Revised - Enrolled Bill - April 8, 2016

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