

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

Senate Bill 987 (Senator Kelley, *et al.*)  
Judicial Proceedings and Budget and Taxation

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State Finance and Procurement – Grant to Individual Erroneously Convicted,  
Sentenced, and Confined

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This bill makes several changes to existing provisions pertaining to payments by the Board of Public Works (BPW) to individuals erroneously convicted, sentenced, and confined under State law for a crime the individual did not commit. Among other provisions, the bill (1) requires, rather than authorizes, BPW to make these payments; (2) establishes a minimum amount for a BPW grant; (3) requires BPW grants to include specified expenses; (4) requires BPW to provide specified services free of charge; and (5) establishes a subtraction modification against the State income tax for the amount of a grant and the value of services provided. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2018, and applies to all taxable years beginning after December 31, 2018.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Potential significant increase in general fund expenditures for BPW. General fund expenditures for the Comptroller increase by \$36,000 in FY 2019 only. Revenues are not anticipated to be affected, as discussed below.

**Local Effect:** Any additional workloads for State’s Attorneys can be handled with existing budgeted resources. Local revenues are not affected.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential meaningful.

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## Analysis

### Bill Summary:

#### *BPW Authority and Grant Amounts*

The bill requires, rather than authorizes, BPW to make a grant to a person erroneously convicted, sentenced, and confined under State law for a crime the individual did not commit who meets statutorily specified requirements. A grant must include at least \$50,000 for each year that the individual was in custody and a reasonable amount for payment of the individual's living expenses on release from confinement, not to exceed \$10,000.

#### *Eligibility for Grants*

The bill establishes that an individual is eligible for a grant if a State's Attorney certifies that the individual's conviction was made in error and removes the requirement that the certification comply with § 8-301 of the Criminal Procedure Article.

#### *Services to Grant Recipients*

BPW must provide the following to a grant recipient free of charge:

- a State identification card and any other document necessary for the individual's health or welfare on the individual's release from confinement;
- housing accommodations available on the individual's release from confinement;
- life skills education and training and job/vocational training until the recipient elects to no longer receive the education and training;
- health care and dental care for at least five years after the individual's release from confinement; and
- access to enrollment at and payment of tuition and fees for attending a public senior higher education institution, a regional higher education center, or the Baltimore City Community College for a period of enrollment of up to five years.

#### *Reentry Plans*

BPW must contact a grant recipient prior to the recipient's release from confinement to develop a plan for providing the aforementioned services. The purpose of the plan is to ensure that the individual is able to successfully reenter and reintegrate into the community after the individual has been released from confinement.

### *Payments to Others by BPW or the Erroneously Convicted Individual*

The bill repeals statutory prohibitions on BPW payments to a person other than the erroneously convicted individual and payments by a grant recipient to another person for services rendered in connection with the collection of the grant.

### *Reporting Requirements*

By December 31, 2018, and annually thereafter, BPW must submit a report to the General Assembly on any grants awarded and services provided to erroneously convicted individuals.

**Current Law:** A person charged by indictment or criminal information with a crime triable in circuit court and convicted of that crime may, at any time, file a petition for writ of actual innocence in the circuit court for the county in which the conviction was imposed if the person claims that there is newly discovered evidence that (1) creates a substantial or significant possibility that the result may have been different, as that standard has been judicially determined and (2) could not have been discovered in time to move for a new trial under Maryland Rule 4-331.

In ruling on a petition, the court may set aside the verdict, resentence, grant a new trial, or correct the sentence, as the court considers appropriate. The court must state the reasons for its ruling on the record. A petitioner in a writ of actual innocence proceeding has the burden of proof.

Section 8-301 of the Criminal Procedure Article authorizes a State's Attorney, upon request of a petitioner for a writ of actual innocence, to certify that a conviction was in error if (1) the court grants the petitioner's petition for relief; (2) the court sets aside the verdict or grants a new trial when ruling on the petitioner's petition for writ of actual innocence; and (3) the State's Attorney declines to prosecute the petitioner because the State's Attorney determines that the petitioner is innocent.

BPW may grant payments to an individual erroneously convicted, sentenced, and confined under State law for a crime the individual did not commit. BPW is authorized to grant an amount commensurate with the actual damages sustained by the individual but is also authorized to grant a reasonable amount for any financial or other appropriate counseling for the individual due to the confinement. An individual is eligible for these payments if (1) the individual has received from the Governor a full pardon stating that the individual's conviction has been shown conclusively to be in error or (2) the State's Attorney certifies that the individual's conviction was in error under § 8-301 of the Criminal Procedure Article.

BPW must make payments from money in the General Emergency Fund or money that the Governor provides in the annual budget. BPW may only make payments to the erroneously convicted individual, and the payments can be made in a lump sum or installments.

An individual is prohibited from paying any part of a received payment to another person for services rendered in connection with the collection of the payment. An obligation incurred in violation of this prohibition is void, and a payment made in violation of this prohibition must be forfeited to the State. However, an individual may contract for services to determine the individual’s innocence, obtain a pardon, or obtain the individual’s release from confinement.

**Background:** According to the Judiciary, there were 194 petitions for writs of actual innocence filed in the State’s circuit courts between fiscal 2014 and 2016. There were 64 petitions filed in the State’s circuit courts (excluding Montgomery County) during fiscal 2017. None of the State’s jurisdictions maintains data on the number of petitions for writs of actual innocence granted or denied.

The Maryland State’s Attorneys’ Association advises that it does not have information on any State’s Attorney certifying that a conviction was made in error since the effective date of legislation establishing that authority (October 1, 2017). However, BPW advises that it has received one grant application for \$1.2 million from an applicant who has a certificate of a conviction made in error from a State’s Attorney.

*BPW Payments*

**Exhibit 1** contains information on BPW payments from 1984 through 2004 (the year of the most recent payment) as well as the minimum base amount proposed under the bill.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**BPW Actual Payment Amounts and**  
**Minimum Base Payment Amounts under the Bill**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Incarceration Period</u>	<u>Actual Amount of BPW Award</u>	<u>Minimum Base Amount Proposed*</u>
2004	26 years, 10 months	\$1.4 million	\$1.34 million
2003	19 years, 8 months	\$900,000	\$983,333
1994	9 years	\$300,000	\$450,000
1987	11 years	\$250,000	\$550,000
1984	11 months	\$16,500	\$45,833

BPW: Board of Public Works

\*Does not include living expenses and services required under the bill.

Source: Department of Legislative Services

BPW advises that payments are made in lump sum payments or installments. Initial payments are made from BPW's contingency fund (also known as the General Emergency Fund), which is usually budgeted at \$500,000 annually and from which payment in full or an initial installment payment may be made. Future installments are made from BPW's Settlement and Judgments Fund. The fund is usually not funded unless a specific amount has been authorized. The last time that fund received an appropriation was fiscal 2015.

### *Pardons and Exonerations*

Pardons are granted at the discretion of the Governor. Being erroneously convicted, sentenced, and confined under State law for a crime the individual did not commit is not a prerequisite for a gubernatorial pardon. Data is not immediately available on the number of individuals erroneously convicted, sentenced, and confined under State law for crimes they did not commit.

The National Registry of Exonerations is a project of the University of California Irvine Newkirk Center for Science and Society, the University of Michigan Law School, and the Michigan State University College of Law. The registry, which is based on publicly available information, collects, analyzes, and compiles information about known exonerations of innocent criminal defendants since 1989. The registry lists information for 25 exonerations in Maryland.

### *Task Force to Study Erroneous Convictions and Imprisonment*

Chapter 800 of 2017 established the Task Force to Study Erroneous Conviction and Imprisonment, which is staffed by the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention. The task force must (1) study the process for establishing an erroneous conviction; (2) study the processes and standards for designating an erroneous conviction in other states; and (3) make recommendations on whether the State should create and implement a new process to designate an erroneous conviction and determine innocence. The task force was required to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by December 15, 2017; however, the final report has not yet been issued. The task force terminates September 30, 2018.

**State Revenues:** The establishment of a subtraction modification against the State income tax for the amount of a grant and the value of any services provided by BPW is not expected to materially affect State revenues. Based on currently available information, it appears that these payments are not included in federal adjusted gross income under the Internal Revenue Code and are, therefore, exempt from State income taxation.

**State Expenditures:** General expenditures increase, perhaps significantly, for BPW to make grants and fund and/or provide services in accordance with the bill's requirements.

In addition, general fund expenditures for the Comptroller increase by \$36,000 in fiscal 2019 only for one-time updates to relevant tax forms and instructions.

The magnitude of the bill's overall effect on general fund expenditures cannot be reliably determined at this time and depends on the (1) number of individuals awarded BPW grants as a result of the bill; (2) the effect of the bill's minimum award calculation on grant amounts; and (3) the need for services by grant recipients and the costs associated with those services.

This estimate does not address:

- any issues with provision of services according to the timelines prescribed in the bill for a grant recipient who has already been released from confinement;
- any overlap or conflict of services or reentry plans provided by BPW with existing prisoner reentry programs, procedures, and services; and
- the eligibility of grant recipients for services under existing programs that are required to be provided by BPW under the bill.

#### *Eligibility for Grants*

The bill expands the pool of eligible applicants by removing compliance with § 8-301 of the Criminal Procedure Article for a certificate of a conviction made in error that is the basis of a grant application. Section 8-301 requires that the following criteria be met before a State's Attorney can certify that an individual's conviction was made in error: (1) the individual was granted a petition for writ of actual innocence; (2) the court set aside the verdict or granted a new trial in response to the petition; and (3) the State's Attorney declined to prosecute the petitioner because the State's Attorney determined that the person is innocent. By removing the application of § 8-301 for grant eligibility purposes, the bill expands the number of individuals who may be able to apply for grants based on a certificate of a conviction made in error, depending on prosecutorial discretion.

The bill also *requires*, rather than *authorizes*, BPW to make grants to eligible applicants. BPW advises that it has never rejected an eligible grant applicant. However, prior to 2017, grant eligibility was based on an applicant obtaining a pardon. It is unclear what, if any, effect the bill's provision has on future grants given the lack of experience under the 2017 statutory changes. As previously noted, BPW has received one application for a grant under the 2017 statute. The amount requested in the application is \$1.2 million.

### *Amounts of Grants Awarded*

The bill establishes a minimum base amount for a grant of \$50,000 per year the individual was in custody and requires BPW to fund and/or provide additional services. BPW advises that it does not have a particular formula that it uses in determining grant awards. However, based on information provided by BPW and included in Exhibit 1, the minimum base amount established under the bill increases general fund expenditures for grants.

The bill removes the prohibition on payment of a grant to a person other than the erroneously convicted individual and payments by the grant recipient to others. This is likely to increase the amount of grant funds requested in an application and overall grant amounts awarded.

The bill's requirement that BPW fund and/or provide specified services also increases general fund expenditures, potentially significantly. The magnitude of the increase in general fund expenditures depends on the need for services among grant recipients, the length of services provided, the way in which services are implemented, and costs associated with those services. Although a reliable estimate of any increase in costs to fund and/or provide services cannot be made, *for illustrative purposes only*, the following examples illustrate the types of costs that may be incurred under the bill.

- Health care costs (required for at least five years after release from confinement): approximately \$10,000 per year based on the purchase price of a “silver plan” on the State’s health exchange for a 40-year old man, including the cost of the deductible but excluding dental care. Costs are expected to increase by at least 10% per year.
- Tuition and fees for fall 2017 at Baltimore City Community College: \$3,196.
- Average proposed fall 2018 tuition and fees at a public four-year institution of higher education: \$9,618.

### *BPW Implementation of Bill*

The bill requires BPW to report annually on grants awarded and services provided under the bill. BPW can handle the bill’s reporting requirements with existing budgeted resources. However, the bill also requires BPW to provide services and develop reentry/reintegration plans for grant recipients – both of these functions are outside the scope of BPW’s existing functions and require additional personnel. As a result, general fund expenditures for BPW increase by \$42,114 in fiscal 2019, which accounts for a 90-day start-up delay. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one part-time social worker to assist and coordinate the development of plans and the provision of services under the

bill. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Position	0.5
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$36,911
Operating Expenses	<u>5,203</u>
<b>Total FY 2019 State Expenditures</b>	<b>\$42,114</b>

Future year expenditures reflect a full salary with annual increases and employee turnover and ongoing operating expenses.

**Small Business Effect:** The bill may have a meaningful impact on attorneys and other small businesses that are able to receive grant funds from BPW or from grant recipients as a result of the bill.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** HB 1225 (Delegate Dumais) - Judiciary and Health and Government Operations.

**Information Source(s):** Comptroller's Office; Maryland State's Attorneys' Association; Maryland Higher Education Commission; Baltimore City Community College; University System of Maryland; St. Mary's College of Maryland; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Board of Public Works; National Registry of Exonerations; Department of Legislative Services

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