

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

House Bill 970  
Ways and Means

(Delegate Reilly, *et al.*)

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Senior Citizen Activities Centers - Bingo Games - Authorization

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This bill allows an individual who is at least 21 years old to conduct a bingo game involving cash prizes if the bingo game (1) is conducted not more than once a week in a common area of a senior citizen activities center and is restricted to members, guests of members, and patrons of the center; (2) allows a player to compete directly against one or more other players where the game is held; (3) does not allow an individual to benefit financially in any way, directly or indirectly, other than from the winnings accrued by participating as a player in the game; and (4) has a specified limit on the total fees charged for all bingo cards and the prize value that may be won by all players during any 24-hour period. The bingo game may not involve progressive jackpot bingo; a player's use of an electronic device that connects to the Internet; the use of paid public advertising or promotions; the charging of specified fees; the use of a machine, apparatus, or device by a player; or the use of any money except money used for purchasing bingo cards. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** None. No longer assessing monetary and/or incarceration penalties for bingo violations at senior citizen activities centers does not materially affect State finances.

**Local Effect:** None. It is assumed that incarceration penalties for bingo violations are rarely assessed, so local finances are not affected. If senior citizen activities centers conduct bingo games, local area agencies on aging and local governments can monitor bingo games with existing resources.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Current Law:** An individual who is at least 21 years old may conduct a home game involving wagering if the home game (1) is limited to mah jong or a card game; (2) is conducted not more than once a week in the individual's home or in a common area of a residential property that is restricted to residents age 55 or older; (3) allows a player to compete directly against one or more other players who share a preexisting social relationship; (4) does not allow an individual to benefit financially in any way, directly or indirectly, other than from the winnings accrued by participating as a player in the game; and (5) has a \$1,000 limit on the total amount of money, tokens representing money, or any other thing or consideration of value that may be wagered by all players during any 24-hour period. The home game may not involve a player's use of an electronic device that connects to the Internet, the use of paid public advertising or promotions, the charging of specified fees, or the use of any money except money used for wagering.

A qualified organization is not prevented from conducting a gaming event for the exclusive benefit of a qualified organization if an individual or a group of individuals does not benefit financially from the gaming event or receive any of the proceeds from the gaming event for personal use or benefit.

A person who violates betting, wagering, and gambling laws is guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction is subject to imprisonment for six months to one year and/or a fine ranging from \$200 to \$1,000.

A person who commits a violation in Baltimore City may be charged by a citation, which may be issued to a person by a police officer authorized to make arrests in Baltimore City if there is probable cause to believe that the person is committing or has committed a violation. The citation must contain specified information, and the police officer who issued the citation must forward a copy of the citation to the appropriate court. The court must promptly schedule the case for trial and schedule the defendant to appear. Willful failure of the defendant to respond to the summons is contempt of court.

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## Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** HB 868 of 2018 received a hearing in the House Ways and Means Committee, but no further action was taken. Its cross file, SB 992, received a hearing in the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, but no further action was taken. SB 1006 of 2017 was amended to be identical to this bill and then passed the Senate. It passed the House with amendments; however, a conference committee was not appointed to reconcile the differences between the two versions of the bill.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of Aging; Maryland State Lottery and Gaming Control Agency; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 22, 2019  
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