

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 944 (Delegate Wivell)
 Ways and Means

Income Tax - Subtraction Modification - Retirement Income of Emergency
 Medical Dispatcher

This bill expands the existing State subtraction modification for retired law enforcement, fire, rescue, and emergency services personnel by extending eligibility to emergency medical dispatchers who are licensed by the State Emergency Medical Services Board. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019, and applies to tax year 2019 and beyond.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund revenues decrease by \$203,000 in FY 2020 due to additional retirement income being exempted. Future year revenue decreases reflect projected growth in retirement income. Expenditures are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
GF Revenue	(\$203,000)	(\$208,000)	(\$212,000)	(\$216,000)	(\$220,000)
Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$203,000)	(\$208,000)	(\$212,000)	(\$216,000)	(\$220,000)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: Local revenues decrease by \$133,000 in FY 2020 and by \$144,000 in FY 2024. Local expenditures are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

State Pension Exclusion – All Eligible Individuals

Maryland law provides a pension exclusion (in the form of a subtraction modification) for individuals who are at least 65 years old or who are totally disabled. Under this subtraction modification, up to a specified maximum amount of taxable pension income (\$30,600 for 2018) may be exempt from tax. The maximum exclusion allowed is indexed to the maximum annual benefit payable under the Social Security Act and is reduced by the amount of any Social Security payments received (Social Security offset).

The “Social Security offset” is the reduction in the maximum pension exclusion allowed under current law for an individual. The Social Security offset was established at the same time as the pension exclusion. Given that Social Security benefits are exempt from Maryland income tax even though benefits are partially taxable for federal purposes, the offset works to equalize the tax treatment of individuals who receive their retirement benefits from different sources by reducing the amount of the allowable exclusion by the amount of any Social Security benefits received.

One significant feature of the current pension exclusion is that it is limited to income received from an employee retirement system. Eligible employee retirement systems are retirement plans established and maintained by an employer for the benefit of its employees and qualified under Sections 401(a), 403, or 457(b) of the Internal Revenue Code. These include defined benefit and defined contribution pension plans, 401(k) plans, 403(b) plans, and 457(b) plans. However, individual retirement arrangements, Keogh plans, and simplified employee pension plans are not considered employee retirement systems.

Law Enforcement Officer; Correctional Officer; and Fire, Rescue, or Emergency Services Personnel

Retired law enforcement officers; correctional officers; and fire, rescue, or emergency services personnel who are age 65 or older or are totally disabled qualify and claim the State pension exclusion in the same manner as other eligible retirees as described above.

Chapters 153 and 154 of 2017 established a pension exclusion for retired law enforcement officers or fire, rescue, or emergency services personnel. Retirement income qualifies for this exclusion if the individual is between the ages of 55 and 64 and the retirement income is attributable to employment as a law enforcement officer or as a fire, rescue, or emergency services personnel of the United States, the State, or a local jurisdiction. Emergency

services personnel includes emergency medical technicians and paramedics. The maximum exclusion in the tax year is limited to \$15,000.

Chapters 573 and 581 of 2018 extended eligibility to correctional officers. An eligible retiree includes an individual who was employed in (1) a State correctional facility; (2) a local correctional facility; (3) a juvenile facility; and (4) a facility of the United States that is equivalent to a State or local correctional facility or juvenile facility in the State.

Background: There are currently about 200 authorized positions within multiple State agencies for police communication officers, emergency medical services communications officers, and related supervisors. Of these positions, an estimated 20 are within the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems and require licensure from the State Emergency Medical Services Board.

Exhibit 1 shows the number of 9-1-1 public safety telecommunicators in the State by county as of March 2018. According to the Maryland State Police, some counties who operate 9-1-1 centers in the State require employee accreditation, while others require in-house training.

Exhibit 1
9-1-1 Telecommunicators in Maryland
March 2018

<u>County</u>	<u>Number of Telecommunicators</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Number of Telecommunicators</u>
Allegany	25	Harford	68
Anne Arundel	105	Howard	75
Baltimore City	220	Kent	15
Baltimore	193	Montgomery	157
Calvert	25	Prince George's	201
Caroline	21	Queen Anne's	24
Carroll	0	St. Mary's	43
Cecil	46	Somerset	16
Charles	60	Talbot	0
Dorchester	25	Washington	66
Frederick	69	Wicomico	19
Garrett	13	Worcester	0
		Total	1,486

Note: Includes full-time and part-time employees.

Source: Emergency Number Systems Board

State Revenues: Additional retirement income may be exempted from the State income tax beginning in tax year 2019. It is assumed that individuals do not adjust withholdings and estimated payments. As a result, general fund revenues may decrease by \$203,000 in fiscal 2020. **Exhibit 2** shows the projected State and local revenue loss from the bill.

Exhibit 2
Projected State and Local Revenue Impact

	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>	<u>FY 2022</u>	<u>FY 2023</u>	<u>FY 2024</u>
State	(\$203,000)	(\$208,000)	(\$212,000)	(\$216,000)	(\$220,000)
Local	(133,000)	(135,000)	(138,000)	(141,000)	(144,000)
Total	(\$336,000)	(\$343,000)	(\$350,000)	(\$357,000)	(\$364,000)

Local Revenues: Local income tax revenues decrease as a result of subtraction modifications claimed against the personal income tax. Local revenues decrease by \$133,000 in fiscal 2020 and by \$144,000 in fiscal 2024, as shown in Exhibit 2.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems; Maryland State Police; Comptroller's Office; Department of Legislative Services

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