

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 1203 (Delegate Conaway)
 Judiciary

Public Safety - Workgroup to Study the Integration of Unmanned Aircraft Systems Within State and Local Government Fire Safety Operations and Pilot Program

This bill establishes the Workgroup to Study the Integration of Unmanned Aircraft Systems within State and Local Government Fire Safety Operations. The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) must provide staff for the workgroup. Among other duties, the workgroup must design and operate an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) pilot program to integrate UASs within State and local government operations that relate to fire safety functions. For fiscal 2022 and 2023, each year the Governor must include in the annual budget bill at least \$350,000 to the Department of State Police (DSP) to provide research, equipment, and training in support of the pilot program. By December 31, 2022, the workgroup must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020, and terminates June 30, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$43,865 in FY 2021; future years reflect the bill’s mandated appropriation in FY 2022 and 2023 and annualized, ongoing administrative costs through FY 2024. Revenues are not affected. **This bill establishes a mandated appropriation for FY 2022 and 2023.**

(in dollars)	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	43,900	350,000	350,000	50,700	0
Net Effect	(\$43,900)	(\$350,000)	(\$350,000)	(\$50,700)	\$0

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Bill Summary: In addition to the requirement to design and operate a UAS pilot program, the workgroup must:

- identify the most feasible and readily available ways to integrate UAS technology within local and State government functions relating to emergencies involving significant property loss or potential for injury or death, emergency management, fire fighting, and search and rescue;
- for each application of UASs that the study identifies, include consideration of privacy concerns, costs, and timeliness of deployment; and
- make recommendations regarding how best to integrate UAS technology within local and State government fire safety functions.

As part of the pilot program, the workgroup must deploy at least one team of UAS operators to a region within the State that has been designated by the State Fire Marshal as a fire hazard. The pilot program must train the UAS operators to operate UASs in various contexts, as specified. UAS operators may be compensated by DSP during training and in support of the pilot program.

In operating the pilot program, the workgroup may not interfere with an active fire suppression effort unless granted permission to assist in the effort, as specified.

Workgroup members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations.

Current Law: Chapter 164 of 2015 established that only the State may enact a law or take other official action to restrict, prohibit, or otherwise regulate the testing or operation of UASs. The authority of a county or municipality to prohibit, restrict, or otherwise regulate the testing or operation of UASs is preempted by this law, and any prior enacted local laws are superseded.

Background: Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones as they are commonly known, have become increasingly popular devices and not just among aviation hobbyists. These aerial vehicles come in various sizes, ranging from the size of an insect (nanodrones or micro-UAVs) to the size of a jetliner. Drones are operated by remote control with personnel on the ground and/or autonomous programming. The entire system required to operate a drone – the personnel, the programming or digital network, and the aircraft – is referred to as a UAS.

UAVs have been used in numerous applications, including photography, firefighting, surveillance, warfare, search and rescue, wildlife tracking, and border patrol.

State Expenditures: Although the bill’s mandated appropriation does not take effect until fiscal 2022, the work of the workgroup begins in fiscal 2021. Thus, this analysis assumes that DSP’s administrative expenditures increase beginning in fiscal 2021 to begin developing research and training for UAS operators. Accordingly, general fund expenditures for DSP increase by \$43,865 in fiscal 2021, which accounts for a 90-day start-up delay. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one contractual program manager to work with the workgroup and UAS operators and to provide research, equipment, and training in support of the pilot program. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Contractual position	1
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$38,499
Operating Expenses	<u>5,366</u>
Total FY 2021 DSP Expenditures	\$43,865

This estimate does not include any health insurance costs that could be incurred for specified contractual employees under the State’s implementation of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Future year administrative expenditures, which total \$47,705 in fiscal 2022, \$49,022 in fiscal 2023, and \$50,668 in fiscal 2024, reflect a full salary with annual increases, employee turnover, ongoing operating expenses, and termination of the contractual employee at the end of fiscal 2024, when the bill terminates. This estimate assumes that these administrative costs are included within the \$350,000 mandated appropriation to provide research, equipment, and training in support of the pilot program in fiscal 2022 and 2023.

Any expense reimbursements for workgroup members and staffing costs for DPSCS are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

Small Business Effect: The bill may have a meaningful impact on small businesses that operate UASs and receive compensation from DSP during training and in support of the pilot program.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Budget and Management; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

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