

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2022 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 959
Judiciary

(Delegate Novotny)

Criminal Law - Sexual Offense in the Fourth Degree - Person in a Position of
Authority Over a Minor

This bill expands the definition of a “person in a position of authority” under the fourth-degree sexual offense statute by (1) including in the definition a person who works in specified types of schools in a capacity other than through employment or under contract and (2) including a school resource officer, police officer, or other security officer in the list of individuals specifically cited as being a person in a position of authority.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Minimal increase in general fund revenues and expenditures due to the bill’s expanded application of existing penalty provisions.

Local Effect: Minimal increase in local revenues and expenditures due to the bill’s expanded application of existing penalty provisions.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary/Current Law:

Person in a Position of Authority

Under current law, a “person in a position of authority” is a person who (1) is at least age 21; (2) is employed by or under contract with a public or private preschool,

elementary school, or secondary school; and (3) because of the person's position or occupation, exercises supervision over a minor who attends the school.

The bill redefines a person in a position of authority to be an individual who is

- at least age 21;
- is employed by, under contract with, *or works in any other capacity in* a public or private preschool, elementary school, or secondary school; and
- because of the person's position or occupation, exercises supervision over a minor who attends the school.

Under current law, a person in a position of authority includes a principal, vice principal, teacher, coach, or school counselor at a public or private preschool, elementary school, or secondary school.

The bill adds to this list *a school resource officer, police officer, or other security officer* at these specified types of schools.

Sexual Offense in the Fourth Degree

Under current law, the crime of fourth-degree sexual offense prohibits a person from (1) engaging in sexual contact with another without the consent of the other or (2) except as prohibited under the third-degree sexual offense statute, engaging in a sexual act or vaginal intercourse with a victim who is age 14 or 15 and the person performing the act is at least four years older than the victim. Additionally, with specified exceptions, it is a fourth-degree sexual offense for a *person in a position of authority* to engage in a sexual act, sexual contact, or vaginal intercourse with a minor who, at the time of the act, contact, or intercourse, is a student enrolled at a school where the person is employed.

A fourth-degree sexual offense is a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment for up to one year and/or a \$1,000 maximum fine. A penalty of imprisonment for up to three years and/or a \$1,000 maximum fine applies to specified subsequent offenders. Imposition of the subsequent offender penalty is subject to specified procedural requirements. There is a three-year statute of limitations for prosecution of a fourth-degree sexual offense involving a person in a position of authority or sexual contact with a minor without the consent of the minor.

State Revenues: General fund revenues increase minimally as a result of the bill's expanded application of existing monetary penalty provisions from cases heard in the District Court.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase minimally as a result of the bill's expanded application of existing incarceration penalties due to more people being committed to State correctional facilities and increased payments to counties for reimbursement of inmate costs. The number of people convicted under the bill is expected to be minimal. The Judiciary can implement the bill's provisions using existing budgeted resources.

Persons serving a sentence longer than 18 months are incarcerated in State correctional facilities. Currently, the average total cost per inmate, including overhead, is estimated at \$4,700 per month. Persons serving a sentence of one year or less in a jurisdiction other than Baltimore City are sentenced to local detention facilities. For persons sentenced to a term of between 12 and 18 months, the sentencing judge has the discretion to order that the sentence be served at a local facility or a State correctional facility. The State provides assistance to the counties for locally sentenced inmates and for (1) inmates who are sentenced to and awaiting transfer to the State correctional system; (2) sentenced inmates confined in a local detention center between 12 and 18 months; and (3) inmates who have been sentenced to the custody of the State but are confined in or who receive reentry or other prerelease programming and services from a local facility.

The State does not pay for pretrial detention time in a local correctional facility. Persons sentenced in Baltimore City are generally incarcerated in State correctional facilities. The Baltimore Pretrial Complex, a State-operated facility, is used primarily for pretrial detentions.

The Office of the Public Defender advises that the bill likely results in a minimal increase in the agency's workload.

Local Revenues: Revenues increase minimally as a result of the bill's expanded application of existing monetary penalty provisions from cases heard in the circuit courts.

Local Expenditures: Expenditures increase minimally as a result of the bill's incarceration penalties. Counties pay the full cost of incarceration for people in their facilities for the first 12 months of the sentence. Per diem operating costs of local detention facilities have ranged from approximately \$90 to \$300 per inmate in recent years.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore, Charles, Frederick, and Montgomery counties; City of Havre de Grace; Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Office of the Public Defender; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Amber R. Gundlach

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510