

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Enrolled - Revised

Senate Bill 823

(Senator Carozza, *et al.*)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Environment and Transportation

Natural Resources - Annual State Park Pass - Discounts for Law Enforcement
Officers and First Responders

This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to provide a discount of at least \$40 on annual State park passes for all first responders and law enforcement officers who are Maryland residents. “Annual State park pass” means a pass issued by DNR that allows the holder unlimited day-use entry to all State parks and State park facilities for one year. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2023.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund revenues decrease minimally beginning in FY 2023, as discussed below. Expenditures are not expected to be materially affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Pursuant to DNR regulations, the State park system is administered under the jurisdiction of the Maryland Park Service (MPS) to preserve and protect the best of Maryland’s natural and historic places for the enjoyment and appreciation of its citizens. The parks are managed to provide public benefits, including (1) natural resource conservation; (2) cultural and historic preservation; (3) watershed protection; (4) education and interpretation; and (5) nature-based outdoor recreation, including trails, picnicking, boating, camping, cabins, hunting, fishing, and swimming.

An individual may not make use of, or gain admittance to, a facility or activity in a State park for which there is a fee, unless the fee is paid. An individual age 62 or older must be admitted to day-use areas free of an admittance charge, if the individual submits proof of age and registers with MPS. In addition, an individual who has a disability that is permanent and substantially limits one or more major life activities must be admitted to day-use areas free of an admittance charge, if the individual registers with MPS.

State Revenues: Special fund revenues decrease annually, beginning in fiscal 2023, as a result of the minimum \$40 discount on [annual State park passes](#) for Maryland residents who are first responders and law enforcement officers. The cost of the annual pass for Maryland residents is \$75. A reliable estimate of the decrease in revenues cannot be made, but the impact is expected to be minimal.

For illustrative purposes, under one set of assumptions, special fund revenues decrease by an estimated \$9,360 each fiscal year (with the exception of fiscal 2023, when the decrease is a fraction of that amount because the bill is only in effect for one month of the fiscal year). This illustrative example is based on the following information and assumptions:

- first responders and law enforcement officers make up approximately 2% of the adult population in the State, consistent with a nationwide percentage calculated using U.S. Census Bureau data for the U.S. adult population and an estimate of the number of first responders and law enforcement officers across the country;
- 11,703 annual State park passes were purchased in calendar 2022 and approximately the same number of annual passes are purchased in future years;
- the percentage of annual State park passes purchased by first responders and law enforcement officers is equivalent to the percentage of the adult population in the State that is assumed to be first responders and law enforcement officers (2%); and
- pursuant to the bill's authority, first responders and law enforcement officers receive a \$40 discount on annual State park passes (although under the bill, DNR could provide a discount of more than \$40).

The decrease in revenues shown in the illustrative example may be offset to some extent if the discount itself results in first responders and law enforcement officers purchasing the annual pass – when, in the absence of the bill, they would not have done so – and paying the remaining discounted fee (\$35, if the discount provided under the bill is \$40).

DNR also currently waives park day-use fees for veterans, active-duty military personnel, and members of the Maryland National Guard. To the extent first responders and law enforcement officers are veterans or members of the National Guard, they may have less

of an incentive to purchase an annual pass, even with the bill's discount (though the annual State park pass does have additional benefits).

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources; U.S. Census Bureau; U.S. Department of Commerce; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 7, 2023
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