

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 478 (Delegate D. Jones, *et al.*)
 Environment and Transportation

Waterway Incident Notification System (WINS) Workgroup

This bill establishes the Waterway Incident Notification System (WINS) Workgroup. The Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) must provide staff for the workgroup. Workgroup members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses, as specified. By December 31, 2023, the workgroup must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2023, and terminates June 30, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: No effect in FY 2023. General fund expenditures increase by \$75,000 in FY 2024 only, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	75,000	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$75,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local government finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The workgroup must study and make recommendations regarding (1) the feasibility of establishing a WINS to notify members of the public, including recreational

boaters and commercial watermen, of active waterway emergencies involving a person at risk of death or serious bodily harm, emergency marine events, or marine hazards and (2) potential partnerships between the State, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Navy, and nearby states to improve notifications to members of the public, including recreational boaters and commercial watermen, of waterway emergencies involving a person at risk of death or serious bodily harm, emergency marine events, or marine hazards.

Current Law:

Radio Equipment in Maritime Vessels

While the Department of Natural Resources is responsible for administering the State Boat Act (which is intended to foster the development, use, and enjoyment of all waters in Maryland), State law is silent on establishing requirements for maritime vessels maintaining radio equipment and monitoring specified radio frequencies in the event of emergencies.

Generally, federal law requires specified larger and working maritime vessels to have a radiotelephone capable of operation from their navigational bridges or main control stations. The radiotelephone must be capable of transmitting and receiving on the frequency or frequencies within the 156-162 Mega-Hertz band using specified classes of radio emissions.

Maryland Department of Emergency Management

Chapters 287 and 288 of 2021 established MDEM as a principal department of the Executive Branch of State government and as the successor to the Maryland Emergency Management Agency. MDEM is responsible for coordinating the State response in any major emergency or disaster. This includes supporting local governments as needed or requested and coordinating assistance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other federal partners. MDEM manages many of the federal grants that fund a broad range of initiatives leading to enhanced protection from and responses to the full range of natural and man-made disasters that could threaten the State's citizens. Chapters 287 and 288 also transferred the Maryland 9-1-1 Board to MDEM from the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.

Within MDEM, the Maryland Joint Operations Center (MJOC) serves as a communication hub for emergency responders statewide and supports local emergency management. MJOC also monitors local, State, national, and international events and alerts decision makers in the State when appropriate.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by \$75,000 in fiscal 2024 only for MDEM to hire a consultant to staff the workgroup, conduct related research, provide subject matter expertise, and develop the required report. MDEM advises, and the Department of Legislative Services concurs, that MDEM cannot absorb the staffing duties for the workgroup and comply with the bill's reporting deadline with existing resources. Though the bill takes effect June 1, 2023, it is assumed that funds to hire the consultant are encumbered in fiscal 2024, so there is no effect in fiscal 2023.

Expense reimbursements for workgroup members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources. State agencies can participate as members of the workgroup with existing budgeted resources.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: SB 336 (Senator Bailey, *et al.*) - Judicial Proceedings.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Emergency Management; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

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js/aad

Analysis by: Thomas S. Elder

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