

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 1101

(Senator Smith, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

Appropriations

Higher Education - Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship
Program - Alterations

This emergency bill expands eligibility for the Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program by expanding eligible institutions to include community colleges in the State.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Expanding *eligibility* for the Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program does not necessitate additional spending, as discussed below. The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) can make needed administrative changes with existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Community college revenues and expenditures are assumed to not be materially affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 59 of 2021, the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021, established the Maryland Police Officers Scholarship Program, which was subsequently expanded (and renamed) by Chapter 100 of 2023 to include probation agents. The Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program provides tuition assistance for students (1) attending a degree program at an “eligible institution” that would further their intent to be a police officer or probation agent after graduation or (2) who are currently police officers or probation agents attending a degree program at an “eligible

institution” that would further their career. The Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) in MHEC must (1) publicize the availability of the scholarship; (2) annually select eligible students and offer a scholarship to each student selected to be used at an eligible institution of the student’s choice; and (3) to the extent practicable, award scholarships under the program in a manner that reflects ethnic, gender, racial, and geographic diversity.

A recipient of a scholarship must (1) be a Maryland resident or have graduated from a Maryland high school; (2) be accepted for admission or currently enrolled at an eligible institution as a full-time or part-time undergraduate or graduate student, as specified; (3) sign a letter of intent to perform the service obligation on completion of the recipient’s required studies; and (4) satisfy any additional criteria MHEC may establish. A current police officer or probation agent that meets the eligibility criteria is also eligible for a scholarship. A recipient of a scholarship must repay MHEC the funds received if the recipient does not (1) satisfy the degree requirements of the course of study or program or fulfill other specified requirements or (2) perform the service obligation to work as a police officer or probation agent for at least five years during the eight-year period after graduation.

The annual scholarship award must be 50% of the equivalent annual tuition and mandatory fees of a resident undergraduate student at the eligible institution. The Governor must annually include in the budget bill an appropriation of at least \$5.0 million to MHEC to award scholarships, and MHEC must use (1) \$2.5 million for scholarships to students intending to become police officers or probation agents after graduation and (2) \$2.5 million for scholarships to existing police officers or probation agents to attend an eligible institution and remain a police officer or probation agent after graduation.

For the Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program, “eligible institution” means a public senior (four-year) higher education institution in the State.

Chapter 59 also established the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Police Officers to assist in the repayment of a higher education loan owed by a police officer who meets specified requirements. Chapter 100 expanded the program to also include probation agents and renamed the program accordingly. OSFA must distribute funds from the program to assist in the repayment of a “higher education loan” owed by a police officer or probation agent who (1) receives a graduate, professional, or undergraduate degree from a public college or university in the State; (2) obtains “eligible employment”; and (3) satisfies any other criteria established by the office. The Governor must include an annual appropriation of at least \$5.0 million in the State budget for the program.

State Expenditures: The fiscal 2025 budget as introduced includes a \$5.0 million general fund appropriation for the Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program. In fiscal 2023 (the first year of awards for the program and the latest year for

which full information is available), MHEC made just five awards for a total of \$7,489 in scholarships. Therefore, this analysis assumes that expansion of eligibility for the scholarship can be accommodated using the existing general fund appropriation.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Howard and Prince George's counties; Maryland Association of Counties; Maryland Municipal League; Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy; Maryland Higher Education Commission; Baltimore City Community College; University System of Maryland; Morgan State University; St. Mary's College of Maryland; Maryland Independent College and University Association; Department of Budget and Management; Department of General Services; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; City of Annapolis; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 27, 2024
km/clb Third Reader - March 28, 2024
Revised - Amendment(s) - March 28, 2024

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