

Department of Legislative Services
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2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 566 (Senator Watson)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Education - Transporting Students and Jobs That Require Driving -
Authorization and Requirements (Drivers Education for Good Jobs Act of 2024)**

This bill requires the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee to establish, by December 31, 2024, a statewide CTE pathway for high school students to prepare for a career that requires driving skills and a driver's license and that leads to the student achieving the required license. The CTE Committee must also establish an annual goal for the number of students who obtain the appropriate driver's license before they graduate from high school. The bill also authorizes a local school board to allow an employee of the board, or an employee of a person that contracts with the board, to transport a public school student in a vehicle if the driver is at least 19 years and 6 months old and has at least three years of experience driving a vehicle. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill can likely be carried out with existing resources, but not by the deadline established by the bill, as discussed below. Implementation of the bill's requirements may also delay other CTE-related priorities, including alignment with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. No effect on revenues.

Local Effect: No direct effect on local school systems, but some may be consulted in the development of the new pathway. Local school systems that elect to offer the new pathway to students likely incur significant costs for teachers, equipment, and training, but any such costs are discretionary. No effect on local revenues.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The CTE pathway established by the CTE Committee must lead to students achieving the driver's license needed for the career, and it must include assistance with:

- obtaining a standard driver's license when the individual is 16 years old;
- enrolling in and completing courses required to obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL) or specialty license before the end of the student's senior year of high school;
- completing three weeks of on-the-road training before July 1 during or immediately after the student's senior year of high school; and
- obtaining a commercial or specialty driver's license as soon as possible after the student reaches the age of 18.

Current Law:

CTE Committee

Chapter 36 of 2021 (Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Implementation) created the CTE Committee as a unit within the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB). The purpose of the committee is to build an integrated, globally competitive framework for providing CTE to Maryland students in public schools, postsecondary institutions, and the workforce.

The CTE Committee is composed of 11 members of GWDB, including 5 *ex officio* members and 6 members jointly appointed by the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Delegates. The 5 *ex officio* members are (1) the State Superintendent; (2) the Secretary of Higher Education; (3) the Secretary of Labor; (4) the Secretary of Commerce; and (5) the chair of the Skills Standards Advisory Committee. The 6 appointed members must collectively represent employers, industry or trade associations, labor organizations, community colleges, the agricultural community, and experts in CTE programming.

In November 2023, the CTE Committee and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that delineates each party's responsibilities related to the administration of the State's CTE program. The MOU specifies that MSDE is responsible for "the development and implementation of high-quality CTE programs..."

CTE Education

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act is the 2018 reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins). The new Perkins law provides approximately \$1.2 billion in formula grants to states to implement CTE programs in their secondary schools and postsecondary institutions. The new law allows states to set their own goals for CTE programs, requires them to make progress toward those goals, and makes other changes to federal CTE law. Under the State plan submitted to the federal government, MSDE administers Perkins funds for the State (and will continue to do so under the MOU). Generally, Perkins requires states to develop sequences of academic and CTE coursework, called programs of study, that prepare students for postsecondary degrees or industry-recognized credentials. Many of the programs of study – which range from plumbing and culinary arts to aerospace engineering and cybersecurity – include or encourage apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship opportunities.

In federal fiscal 2023, Maryland received \$20.6 million in Perkins Title I grants to support CTE programs in secondary schools and postsecondary institutions. Of that amount, \$17.5 million (85%) was distributed to local governments, and the remaining 15% was designated for statewide activities and administration. Most of the local distribution, \$16.6 million, was allocated to eligible recipients, with 65% for secondary school programs and 35% for postsecondary programs. Perkins funds are used for a variety of purposes at the local level, including teacher professional development, equipment, and program development and administration.

MSDE has developed several dozen programs of study grouped within [12 career clusters](#), including a transportation technologies cluster. Each program of study includes a sequence of four courses that begin in either grade 10 or grade 11 and prepares students for either further study or industry certification.

Driver's Licenses

An individual must be at least 21 years old to drive a commercial vehicle across state lines, or at least 18 to drive a commercial vehicle within the State.

If an individual otherwise qualifies, the Motor Vehicle Administration may issue (1) a learner's instructional permit to an individual who is at least 15 years, 9 months old; (2) a provisional license to an individual who is at least 16 years, 6 months old; or (3) a driver's license to an individual who is at least 18 years old.

School Buses and Drivers

Current regulations require school bus drivers to be at least 21 years of age, complete specified preservice instruction, and hold a CDL, among other requirements.

In general, only “Type I” and “Type II” vehicles may be used to transport students to and from school. Type I vehicles must be designed and constructed to carry passengers, meet specified design specifications, have a gross vehicle weight of more than 15,000 pounds, and provide at least 13 inches of seating space per passenger. Type II vehicles are identical but have a gross vehicle weight of 15,000 pounds or less.

Vehicles other than Type I and Type II may be used to transport students to and from school if (1) the vehicle is a taxicab; (2) only one student is transported; (3) the vehicle is a commercial motor coach; or (4) a local board of education determines that it is necessary to own, operate, or contract the use of an alternative school vehicle for student transportation.

State Expenditures: Although the bill specifies that the CTE Committee must develop the new pathway, the terms of the MOU indicate that MSDE has primary responsibility for developing CTE programs. The CTE Committee will likely assist in that process, but it lacks sufficient staff and expertise to play a substantial role in the development process. As MSDE’s CTE programming already includes a transportation technologies career cluster, and pathway development falls under MSDE’s normal responsibilities, it can likely develop the new pathway with existing resources. However, staff time spent on developing the new pathway may take away from other MSDE priorities, including aligning CTE programming with the Blueprint and developing a new State CTE plan, required by Perkins.

Moreover, the CTE Committee advises that it is unlikely that the new pathway can be completed by the December 2024 deadline established by the bill. Development of a new pathway requires extensive consultation and collaboration with multiple stakeholders, including CDL training providers and local school systems. It also requires developing curriculum for at least three courses as well as hands-on training components. These tasks likely cannot be completed in six months.

Moreover, the bill requires some components of the new pathway to occur after a student graduates from high school, including on-the-road training and obtaining a CDL that allows for interstate travel. These components likely require articulation with community college partners and/or CDL training providers.

Additional Comments: The bill’s requirement for the CTE pathway to include assistance with obtaining a *standard* driver’s license when the individual is 16 years old is assumed

to mean a learner's instructional permit, as a provisional license may only be issued to an individual who is at least 16 and a half years old. Moreover, as noted above, an individual must be at least age 18 to be issued a driver's license.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 422 and HB 750 of 2022.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Labor; Maryland Department of Transportation; Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Baltimore County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Prince George's County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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