

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 597
Judiciary

(The Speaker, *et al.*) (By Request - Administration)

Judicial Proceedings

Growing Apprenticeships and the Public Safety Workforce (GAPS) Act

This Administration bill renames the Law Enforcement Cadet Apprenticeship Program in the Maryland Department of Labor (MDL) to be the Public Safety Apprenticeship Program and expands the purposes and scope of the program, including expanding eligibility for the program to include public safety agencies and groups of public safety agencies (instead of just law enforcement agencies). The bill also alters the eligibility criteria, the types of grants awarded, and the maximum grant amount that may be awarded under the program; MDL may award start-up grants of up to \$200,000 and stabilization grants of up to \$5,000. In addition, the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC) must (1) develop mental health wellness policies to be implemented in law enforcement agencies and correctional facilities in the State and (2) submit a related annual report. Finally, the bill establishes the Workgroup on Growing Engagement in the Law Enforcement and Corrections Workforce, staffed by MPTSC, to study and make recommendations related to the law enforcement and corrections workforce. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2024; provisions relating to the workgroup terminate June 30, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill can likely be implemented using existing budgeted resources, as discussed below. State public safety agencies may benefit from the expanded apprenticeship program, as discussed below. The bill does not otherwise affect State finances.

Local Effect: Local public safety agencies may benefit from the expanded apprenticeship program, as discussed below. The bill does not otherwise affect local finances.

Small Business Effect: The Administration has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). The Department of Legislative Services concurs with this assessment. (The attached assessment does not reflect amendments to the bill.)

Analysis

Bill Summary: “Public safety agency” includes a correctional unit, a law enforcement agency, and a public safety agency as defined in current law, which means (1) a functional division of a public agency that provides firefighting, police, medical, or other emergency services or (2) a private entity that provides firefighting, police, medical, or other emergency services on a voluntary basis.

The bill’s provisions may not be construed as reducing or lowering the minimum qualifications for employment in a public safety agency.

Public Safety Apprenticeship Program: The purposes of the renamed and expanded program are modified to:

- provide young individuals opportunities to begin a career with a *public safety agency*;
- foster positive relationships between the public, particularly young individuals, and *public safety agencies*;
- develop a cohort of individuals qualified to join a *public safety agency*;
- encourage *public safety agencies* to hire apprentices; and
- help *public safety agencies* offset additional costs, if any, associated with hiring apprentices.

The program must consist of start-up grants and stabilization grants. A public safety agency or a group of public safety agencies participating in the program must (1) develop a registered apprenticeship program and (2) establish a registered apprenticeship program that develops a career path that enables an individual to work in a public safety agency.

MDL must administer the program as modified by the bill and award start-up and stabilization grants under the program on a competitive basis to an eligible public safety agency or a group of eligible public safety agencies.

MDL may award to a public safety agency or a group of public safety agencies (1) a start-up grant of up to \$200,000 for the development and launch of a public safety agency’s registered apprenticeship program under the bill and (2) a stabilization grant of up to \$5,000 on the initial enrollment of each apprentice in the public safety agency’s registered apprenticeship program. However, MDL may not award a start-up or stabilization grant to a public safety agency or a group of public safety agencies that fail to bargain with the appropriate exclusive representative regarding any adjustments to wages, hours, or other terms and conditions of employment that are required for individuals to participate in the public safety agency’s apprenticeship program.

The bill repeals several provisions relating to the cadet apprenticeship program rendered obsolete by the bill, including provisions related to grant eligibility and grant amounts.

Mental Health Wellness Policies: MPTSC must develop mental health wellness policies to be implemented in law enforcement agencies and correctional facilities in the State by:

- determining ways to promote safety and wellness at every level of a law enforcement agency and a correctional facility;
- incorporating into trainings stress management techniques designed by law enforcement officers and correctional officers;
- establishing confidential peer support programs;
- offering psychological programming to help officers manage stress; and
- using measuring tools to track effectiveness.

By January 1, 2025, and annually thereafter, MPTSC must report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the status of the development and implementation of those policies and the effects of the policies.

Workgroup on Growing Engagement in the Law Enforcement and Corrections Workforce: The workgroup must (1) identify and study the shortage of employees in the law enforcement and corrections fields; (2) determine ways to advertise and promote law enforcement and corrections employment opportunities across the State; (3) explore recruitment and retention strategies used in the law enforcement and corrections fields that have been successful in other states and countries; and (4) make recommendations on incentives or other methods to increase the number of employees in the law enforcement and corrections workforce.

The Governor must designate the chair of the workgroup, and the workgroup may establish a subgroup to assist the workgroup in carrying out its duties, as specified. Members of the workgroup or any subgroup established may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses, as specified.

By January 1, 2025, the workgroup must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly.

Current Law:

Law Enforcement Cadet Apprenticeship Program: Chapter 25 of 2019 established a Law Enforcement Cadet Apprenticeship Program in MDL to award competitive grants to law enforcement agencies, defined as the police departments of a county, municipal corporation, or university in Maryland.

The purposes of the Cadet Program are to:

- provide young individuals opportunities to begin a career in law enforcement;
- foster positive relationships between the public, particularly young individuals, and law enforcement agencies;
- develop a cohort of individuals qualified to join a law enforcement agency;
- encourage law enforcement agencies to hire apprentices; and
- help law enforcement agencies offset additional costs, if any, associated with hiring apprentices.

MDL is charged with administering the Cadet Program and awarding competitive grants to law enforcement agencies. To be eligible for an award, the law enforcement agency must employ at least one apprentice who (1) has been employed by the agency for at least seven months; (2) is enrolled in the first year of a specified apprenticeship program; and (3) lives in a zip code in which at least 10% of the population is below the federal poverty level, as specified.

The amount of a grant awarded under the Cadet Program is based on the number of apprentices within the law enforcement agency who meet all three of the eligibility criteria and is generally capped at \$2,000 for each such apprentice. However, for an eligible university law enforcement agency, a grant award is capped at \$1,000 for each such apprentice. The Governor must include in the State budget an appropriation of at least \$750,000 each year for the Cadet Program. The fiscal 2025 budget as introduced includes the mandated \$750,000 for the Cadet Program.

Police Recruitment & Retention Initiative: The Police Recruitment & Retention (PRAR) initiative within the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (formerly the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services) provides funding to local law enforcement agencies to recruit and retain qualified sworn police officers. The fiscal 2025 budget as introduced includes \$1.3 million in general funds for PRAR.

Tuition waiver and loan repayment programs help improve the knowledge base of police officers and are an important recruitment and retention benefit. Chapter 59 of 2021, the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021, established the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program (LARP) for police officers to assist in the repayment of a higher education loan owed by a police officer who meets specified requirements. Chapter 100 of 2023 renamed and expanded the program to allow specified parole and probation agents to qualify for LARP and increased the mandated appropriation from \$1.5 million to \$5.0 million. The fiscal 2025 budget as introduced includes \$5.0 million for LARP.

In addition, the Maryland Police Officers Scholarship Program provides tuition assistance. A recipient of a scholarship must meet specified requirements, including satisfying any additional criteria that the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) may establish. A recipient of a scholarship must repay the commission the funds received if the recipient does not satisfy or fulfill the specified program requirements. Chapter 100 also renamed and expanded the scholarship program to allow specified parole and probation agents to qualify. However, Chapter 100 reduced the mandated appropriation for the scholarship program by \$3.5 million so that the Governor must include \$5.0 million, instead of \$8.5 million, in the annual budget to MHEC to award scholarships (\$2.5 million must be used for scholarships to students intending to become police officers or probation agents after graduation and \$2.5 million must be used for existing police officers or probation agents to attend an eligible institution and remain a police officer or probation agent after graduation). The fiscal 2025 budget as introduced includes \$5.0 million for the scholarship program.

Income Tax – Subtraction Modification: Chapter 519 of 2016 established a subtraction modification of up to \$5,000 of the income earned by a law enforcement officer if (1) the officer resides in the political subdivision in which the officer is employed and (2) the crime rate in the political subdivision exceeds the State’s crime rate. Chapter 631 of 2020 expanded the subtraction modification for local law enforcement officers by extending eligibility to law enforcement officers of the Maryland-National Capital Park Police and the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission Police Force.

Background: The 2022 [Joint Chairmen’s Report](#) outlined concerns with workforce shortages among government employees in the public safety, health, and transportation sectors. The report directed MDL to convene workgroups to study and report on the short-term and long-term needs in each respective sector, as specified.

The [final report](#) of the Public Safety Apprenticeship Workgroup included the following recommendations: (1) encourage government agencies to partner with MDL, the Department of Budget Management, local workforce development boards, and bargaining units to assess workforce needs and explore apprenticeship options; (2) promote group, regional, and jurisdictional apprenticeship programs for local public safety agencies; and (3) assess and reform policies, processes, and hiring requirements that may be limiting the success of workers, employers, and apprentices.

In addition, Chapter 168 of 2023 established the Apprenticeship 2030 Commission. The purpose of the commission is to examine and make recommendations to reduce skill shortages in high-demand occupations and provide affordable training for career pathways for young people by:

- expanding registered apprenticeships in industry sectors with skill shortages;

- growing the number of registered apprentices to at least 60,000 by 2030; and
- reaching the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future goal for 45% of high school graduates completing the high school level of a registered apprenticeship.

The Apprenticeship 2030 Commission met four times in 2023 and published the [Interim Report of the Apprenticeship 2030 Commission](#). For more information regarding apprenticeships in the State, see the **Appendix – Apprenticeship**.

State/Local Fiscal Effect: As noted above, the fiscal 2025 budget as introduced includes \$750,000 in general funds for the Public Safety Apprenticeship Program, consistent with the mandated appropriation required by statute for each fiscal year. The money may be used to provide grants to eligible public safety agencies and to cover MDL’s administrative costs of operating the program. MDL advises that it has not made grants under the program since its inception, presumably because law enforcement agencies are not applying for such grants. Therefore, it is assumed that MDL can use the existing mandated appropriation of \$750,000 annually to make start-up and stabilization grants under the expanded program, with no need for any additional resources. If the program expansion results in a sizeable increase in the demand for grants that strains current funding levels, additional funds may be needed in the future, but any such increase seems unlikely at this time.

While the overall level of funding available for the program is not anticipated to be affected, some State and local public safety agencies may benefit from the expansion of the program. Specifically, some public safety agencies and groups of public safety agencies that are not currently eligible for the program become eligible under the bill, and grant awards are increased.

MPTSC can develop the mental health wellness policies, submit the required reports, and staff the workgroup with existing budgeted resources. Any expense reimbursements for workgroup members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: SB 470 (The President, *et al.*) (By Request - Administration) - Judicial Proceedings.

Information Source(s): Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems; Baltimore City; Montgomery, Talbot, and Wicomico counties; City of Frostburg; Alcohol, Tobacco, and Cannabis Commission; Comptroller's Office; Governor's Office; University System of Maryland; Morgan State University; St. Mary's College of Maryland; Department of General Services; Department of Juvenile Services; Maryland Department of Labor; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 4, 2024
rh/mcr Third Reader - March 27, 2024
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Appendix – Apprenticeship

Generally, apprenticeship is a voluntary, industry-sponsored system that prepares individuals for occupations typically requiring high-level skills and related technical knowledge. Apprenticeships are sponsored by one or more employers or jointly by a labor-management committee. An apprentice receives supervised, structured, on-the-job training under the direction of a skilled journeyman and related technical instruction in a specific occupation. Apprenticeships are designed to meet the workforce needs of the program sponsor. Many industry sponsors use apprenticeship as a method to train employees in the knowledge necessary to become a skilled worker. This also means the number of apprenticeships available is dependent on the current workforce needs of the industry and the capacity and willingness of employers or employer groups to supervise them.

Apprenticeships are available to individuals age 16 and older; an employer, however, may set a higher entry age. By law, individuals must be age 18 to apprentice in hazardous occupations, although there are some exemptions available to minors who are registered as apprentices. Time-based apprenticeships last from one to six years and involve a minimum of 144 hours of related technical instruction and at least 2,000 hours per year of on-the-job training.

A national apprenticeship and training program was established in federal law in 1937 with the passage of the National Apprenticeship Act, also known as the Fitzgerald Act. The purpose of the Act was to promote national standards of apprenticeship and to safeguard the welfare of apprentice workers.

Along with [more than half of other states and the District of Columbia](#), Maryland has chosen to operate its own apprenticeship programs under the federal law. The Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) within the Maryland Department of Labor is responsible for the daily oversight of State apprenticeship programs. More specifically, DWDAL approves new apprenticeship programs as well as changes to current programs and ensures compliance with State and federal requirements. The approval process involves assessing the appropriateness of an apprenticeship program in a proposed industry, the education that will be provided to the apprentice, the current staffing level of the entity proposing the program to determine whether adequate supervision can be provided, recruitment and retention efforts, and the overall operations of the entity. The Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council serves in an advisory role for legislation and regulations, recommending changes to update apprenticeship laws.

As of November 28, 2023, there were 11,530 apprentices registered in 125 different occupations, with more than 400 approved registered apprenticeship programs and more than 3,800 employers. There were 1,825 Certificates of Completion for apprentices processed between January 1, 2023, and November 28, 2023. The State added 38 new apprenticeship programs in 2023. The diversity of Maryland's apprenticeship system has also increased since the transfer of the program to DWDAL in 2016. The percentage of minority apprentices increased from 36% in November 2016 to 44% in November 2023. Likewise, the percentage of female apprentices increased from 3.7% in November 2016 to 7.7% in November 2023.

Chapter 168 (Senate Bill 104) of 2023 established the Apprenticeship 2030 Commission. The purpose of the commission is to examine and make recommendations to reduce skill shortages in high-demand occupations and provide affordable training for career pathways for young people by:

- expanding registered apprenticeships in industry sectors with skill shortages;
- growing the number of registered apprentices to at least 60,000 by 2030; and
- reaching the Blueprint for Maryland's Future goal for 45% of high school graduates completing the high school level of a registered apprenticeship.

The Apprenticeship 2030 Commission met four times in 2023 and published the [Interim Report of the Apprenticeship 2030 Commission](#).

ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESSES

TITLE OF BILL: **Growing Apprenticeships and the Public Safety Workforce (GAPS) Act**

BILL NUMBER: HB 597

PREPARED BY: Governor's Legislative Office

PART A. ECONOMIC IMPACT RATING

This agency estimates that the proposed bill:

WILL HAVE MINIMAL OR NO ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL BUSINESS

OR

WILL HAVE MEANINGFUL ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL BUSINESSES

PART B. ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS