

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 899
Appropriations

(Delegate D. Jones, *et al.*)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Higher Education - Firefighters and EMS Recruitment and Retention -
Scholarship

This bill alters the Charles W. Riley Firefighter and Ambulance Rescue Squad Member Scholarship by (1) authorizing individuals who enroll in *courses* (rather than programs) to receive the award; (2) expanding the scholarship to include graduate courses at 50% the equivalent annual tuition; (3) requiring initial awards to be provided to scholarship recipients on a first-come, first-served basis; (4) giving preference to students majoring in service technology, emergency medical technology, fire service management, or public safety administration in the distribution of the first \$400,000 of scholarship awards; (5) specifying that any student financial aid, other than a student loan, must be credited to the recipient's tuition before the calculation of any award amount provided through the scholarship; and (6) authorizing recipients enrolled in a course at a community college to hold the award for as long as they continue to meet all qualifications for the scholarship. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) general fund expenditures increase by \$15,000 in FY 2025 for system enhancements. Special fund appropriations for the Riley scholarship are more likely to be expended, as discussed below. Any effect on higher education revenues is assumed to be minimal.

Local Effect: Any effect on community college revenues and expenditures is assumed to be minimal.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill expands eligibility requirements such that an individual must only be accepted for admission or enrolled in a *course* offered at an eligible institution (instead of enrolled in a regular undergraduate program at a Maryland institution of higher education or a two-year terminal certificate program in which the course work is eligible for transfer into a baccalaureate program at a Maryland institution of higher education). Accordingly, the bill specifies that service requirements must be completed after completion of *study* at an eligible institution (instead of completion of an eligible program in an eligible institution).

The bill alters the maximum award amount that may be issued under the Riley scholarships. Awards may be up to either 100% (for undergraduate study) or 50% (for graduate study) of the equivalent annual tuition and mandatory fees of a resident student at the four-year public institution of higher education within the University System of Maryland (USM), other than the University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC) and University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus (UMB), with the highest annual expenses for either a full-time resident undergraduate or a full-time resident graduate, as appropriate.

Current Law:

Charles W. Riley Firefighter and Ambulance Rescue Squad Member Scholarship

Chapter 503 of 2013 established the Charles W. Riley Firefighter and Ambulance Rescue Squad Member Scholarship and repealed the Charles W. Riley Fire and Emergency Medical Services Tuition Reimbursement Program, effectively converting the tuition reimbursement program to a scholarship program.

To be eligible for a scholarship, an actively engaged firefighter, ambulance, or rescue squad member must be a Maryland resident and must be accepted for admission or enrolled in a regular undergraduate program at a Maryland institution of higher education or a two-year terminal certificate program in which the course work is eligible for transfer into a baccalaureate program at a Maryland institution of higher education. Scholarship recipients must maintain a grade point average of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale and may hold the scholarship for up to five years of full-time study or eight years of part-time study.

A scholarship may be up to 100% of the equivalent annual tuition and mandatory fees of a resident undergraduate student at the four-year public institution of higher education within USM, other than UMGC and UMB, with the highest annual expenses for a full-time resident undergraduate. A scholarship may be used for the tuition and mandatory fees at any eligible institution. A firefighter or ambulance or rescue squad member must use the scholarship for courses credited toward a degree in fire service technology, emergency

medical technology, fire service management, or public safety administration with a minor or concentration in fire service technology or fire service management.

A recipient of a Charles W. Riley Firefighter and Ambulance Rescue Squad Member Scholarship must work for at least one year as a volunteer or career firefighter or ambulance or rescue squad member in an organized fire department or ambulance or rescue squad in the State after completion of an eligible program in an eligible institution. A scholarship recipient must repay MHEC the funds received for a scholarship if the recipient does not perform the required service obligation.

State Expenditures:

Charles W. Riley Firefighter and Ambulance Rescue Squad Member Scholarship

The Charles W. Riley Firefighter and Ambulance Rescue Squad Member Scholarship is special funded through a required annual appropriation from a \$7.50 surcharge on certain District Court traffic cases. Since the scholarship was fully transitioned from the tuition reimbursement program in fiscal 2015, \$358,000 has been appropriated to the scholarship annually. The fiscal 2025 budget as introduced includes a \$358,000 Charles W. Riley Firefighter and Ambulance Rescue Squad Member Scholarship Fund appropriation to the program. However, in fiscal 2023 just 21 applicants received \$134,809 in awards under the scholarship.

Therefore, to the extent additional applicants qualify for the Riley scholarship under the bill, special funds appropriated for the Riley scholarship are more likely to be expended; however, the bill does not require any additional funds to be annually appropriated for the scholarship. It is assumed that MHEC awards scholarships that total no more than the current annual appropriation. For fiscal 2025, the highest tuition and fees for a resident undergraduate student at a USM institution, except UMGC and UMB, is \$15,541. For graduate students, this figure can reach approximately \$44,064 annually for a 32-credit year in the Juris Doctor program at the University of Baltimore, though it is unclear if this amount fully encompasses all fees. Consequently, one-half of this maximum tuition equates to \$22,042 per year.

Current law caps the maximum scholarship award for fiscal 2025 at \$15,541, which is the highest undergraduate tuition and fees. The bill, however, extends eligibility to community college and graduate courses, increasing the maximum scholarship award to accommodate the higher costs associated with graduate programs. This expansion may lead to an increase in both the number and average size of awards, thereby increasing the likelihood of fully utilizing the allocated special funds. In fiscal 2023, the average scholarship amount was \$6,400, suggesting the potential for significant growth in award sizes under the provisions in the bill.

Maryland Higher Education Commission Administrative Expenditures

General fund expenditures for MEHC increase by \$15,000 in fiscal 2025 for system enhancements to the Maryland College Aid Processing System to change award eligibility criteria, establish award priorities, and calculate new maximum award amounts.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: SB 691 (Senator Augustine) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

Information Source(s): Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems; Baltimore, Frederick, and Montgomery counties; Maryland Association of Counties; City of Havre de Grace; Maryland Municipal League; Maryland Higher Education Commission; University System of Maryland; Morgan State University; St. Mary's College of Maryland; Department of Budget and Management; Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 28, 2024
km/clb Revised - Clarification - March 11, 2024
Third Reader - April 2, 2024
Revised - Amendment(s) - April 2, 2024
Revised - Correction - April 2, 2024

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