

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 180
 Judiciary

(Delegate Addison)

Public Safety - Gun Violence Victim Relocation Program - Establishment

This bill establishes (1) the Gun Violence Victim Relocation Program within the Victim Services Unit (VSU) of the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) to assist in the relocation of victims of gun violence in the State to ensure the safety and well-being of the victim and the victim’s family. The bill establishes a related special fund – the Gun Violence Victim Relocation Program Fund – administered by VSU. For fiscal 2027 only, the Governor must include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$10.0 million to the fund. VSU must also establish an oversight commission to ensure that the program is administered properly and that the fund is used appropriately. By December 1 each year, beginning in 2027, VSU must report specified information relating to the status of the program to the Governor and the General Assembly. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: No effect in FY 2026. General fund expenditures increase by \$10.0 million in FY 2027 and FY 2030 to capitalize the fund, although funding is only mandated in FY 2027; special fund revenues increase correspondingly in those years. Special fund expenditures increase by \$2.7 million in FY 2027; future year estimates reflect ongoing costs and inflation. **This bill establishes a mandated appropriation for FY 2027 only.**

| (\$ in millions) | FY 2026 | FY 2027 | FY 2028 | FY 2029 | FY 2030 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| SF Revenue | \$0 | \$10.0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$10.0 |
| GF Expenditure | \$0 | \$10.0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$10.0 |
| SF Expenditure | \$0 | \$2.7 | \$2.7 | \$2.8 | \$2.8 |
| Net Effect | \$0.0 | (\$2.7) | (\$2.7) | (\$2.8) | (\$2.8) |

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

Local Effect: Potential minimal increase in local government expenditures and revenues.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Gun Violence Victim Relocation Program: An individual may request participation in the program through VSU. An individual is eligible for assistance through the program if the individual (1) is a victim of gun violence in the State; (2) experienced the violence within close proximity to the individual's home or lives in close proximity to a person who is suspected to have caused the violence; and (3) demonstrates a need to be relocated for the safety of the individual or the individual's family. VSU must accept any eligible individual into the program except for an individual suspected to have perpetrated the violence.

VSU must keep the personal information of applicants confidential, as specified. In addition, VSU must establish an appeal process for an individual determined to be ineligible and denied assistance under the program.

VSU must (1) collaborate with other State and local agencies, including law enforcement, housing authorities, and social services, to provide comprehensive services to victims under the program; (2) conduct community outreach in order to educate the public about the program and to encourage victims of gun violence to seek assistance under the program; and (3) work to ensure that victims under the program who are renters are protected from eviction or from being denied rental housing based on the victim's status in the program.

VSU must assist an eligible victim accepted into the program by:

- relocating the victim and the victim's family to a safe location;
- providing the victim with financial assistance for moving expenses, security deposit, and rent; and
- providing other support services, including counseling, legal assistance, job training, and resources and services for individuals with disabilities.

VSU must adopt rules and regulations necessary to carry out the bill's provisions.

Gun Violence Victim Relocation Program Fund: The purpose of the fund is to carry out the bill's provisions, and the fund may only be used for carrying out that purpose. The fund consists of money appropriated in the State budget to the fund, private donations, and any other money from any other source accepted for the benefit of the fund. Any interest earnings of the fund must be credited to the fund.

The fund is subject to audit by the Office of Legislative Audits (OLA).

Current Law: The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (CICB) awards grants to innocent victims of crime who incur financial hardship as a result of crime. Those eligible for awards include (1) a victim; (2) a dependent of a victim who died as a result of a crime or delinquent act, trying to prevent a crime or specified acts, or helping a law enforcement officer perform the officer's duties or specified emergency services personnel who is obstructed in their duties; (3) any person who paid or assumed responsibility for the funeral expenses of a victim who died as a result of specified acts; and (4) family members of a victim, as specified. Awards may be made for lost wages, medical expenses, counseling, crime scene cleanup, and, for homicide victims, funeral expenses. CICB may make an award only if the claimant, as a result of the injury on which the claim is based, has (1) incurred at least \$100 in unreimbursed and unreimbursable expenses or indebtedness reasonably incurred or claimed for specified necessary expenses or (2) lost at least \$100 in earnings or support. Compensation awarded may not exceed specified limitations, and funding for these awards is provided by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF), which receives funding from fees assessed by circuit courts and the District Court. The fund is also supplemented by federal funds.

The Victim and Witness Protection and Relocation Fund (VWPRF) is a special fund used to carry out the Victim and Witness Protection and Relocation Program, which is administered by the States' Attorneys' coordinator. The fund consists of court costs imposed on defendants convicted of crimes. The Comptroller deposits \$2.50 from each fee collected in circuit courts and the District Court (excluding fees from motor vehicle cases that are not punishable by imprisonment) to VWPRF.

Court costs are imposed on a defendant convicted of a crime in the amount of \$45 for the circuit court and \$35 for the District Court. Court costs, in the amount of \$3, are imposed on a defendant convicted of certain motor vehicle offenses in the District Court. The Comptroller deposits \$22.50 from each fee collected in circuit court and \$12.50 from each fee collected in District Court (excluding fees from motor vehicle cases that are not punishable by imprisonment) into the State Victims of Crime Fund (SVCF), a special fund used for carrying out statutory guidelines for treatment and assistance to victims of crime and delinquent acts. The State Board of Victims Services in GOCPP is responsible for administering the fund. All other monies from these fees are deposited into CICF.

CICF and SVCF share the first \$500,000 attained from the \$3 assessed in the District Court for motor vehicle cases that are not punishable by imprisonment. After the \$500,000 threshold is reached and each fund has acquired \$250,000, CICF receives the remainder of funding from these fees.

In addition to monies transferred to CICF under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act, the Comptroller is required to annually transfer \$500,000 to CICF and \$125,000 to

VWPRF, which must be in addition to the transfers cited above and which is also drawn from court costs in criminal and traffic cases in the District Court.

The fiscal 2026 budget as introduced includes \$300,168 for VWPRF. In addition, the fiscal 2026 budget as introduced includes \$3.3 million in federal funds, \$1.9 million in special funds, and \$1.1 million in general funds for CICB and approximately \$3.4 million in special funds for CICF.

State Fiscal Effect:

Capitalization of the Gun Violence Victim Relocation Fund

General fund expenditures increase by \$10.0 million in fiscal 2027 to initially capitalize the Gun Violence Victim Relocation Fund, as mandated by the bill. Based on the anticipated costs of the program, as discussed below, it is assumed that an additional \$10.0 million in general funds is needed to recapitalize the fund in fiscal 2030, although funding in that year (and at that level) is not mandated. Because the program is ongoing, additional capitalization funds will need to be provided in the future, but any such impact falls outside the five-year period covered by this fiscal and policy note.

Special fund revenues to the fund increase correspondingly in fiscal 2027 and 2030, reflecting receipt of the general funds.

Spending from the Gun Violence Victim Relocation Fund

Assistance to Eligible Victims: Based on information provided by GOCPP, it is assumed that special fund expenditures increase by an estimated \$2.0 million annually beginning in fiscal 2027 to provide assistance to eligible victims as required by the bill.

Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy Administrative Costs: Because the bill states that the fund is to be used to carry out the purpose of the bill, it is assumed that the special fund can be used to cover costs incurred by GOCPP to administer the program. GOCPP administrative expenditures increase by *at least* \$584,710 in fiscal 2027, which assumes that the program is implemented at the start of fiscal 2027 (consistent with the timing of the mandated appropriation). This estimate reflects costs for VSU to hire seven employees (two administrative aides, one administrative officer, three administrative assistants, and one fiscal clerk) to manage the program and fund, work with the oversight commission, work with other entities to provide assistance to eligible victims, and generally implement the bill. It includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

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| Positions | 7.0 |
| Salaries and Fringe Benefits | \$531,117 |
| Other Operating Expenses | <u>53,593</u> |
| Minimum FY 2027 GOCPP Admin. Expenditures | \$584,710 |

Future year administrative expenditures for GOCPP, which range from at least \$563,036 in fiscal 2028 to at least \$613,241 by fiscal 2030, reflect salaries with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

The bill states that the requirements relating to the program must be liberally construed and applied to promote the underlying purpose of the program. As VSU does not currently operate any type of victim relocation program, VSU advises that the unit intends to collaborate with other State and local agencies with experience operating victim relocation programs to provide assistance to eligible victims. Without actual experience under the bill, it is not possible to estimate the extent to which such collaboration will cover the full assistance needs of eligible victims under the program. To the extent that VSU is unable to utilize services through collaboration with other entities and must directly provide required services, the need for staff – and the resulting administrative costs – could be significantly higher.

Office of the Attorney General Administrative Costs: It is assumed that the special fund can also be used to cover costs incurred by the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) as a result of the program, which are expected to be incurred beginning in fiscal 2027, consistent with the implementation of the program. Accordingly, OAG administrative expenditures increase by \$164,347 in fiscal 2027. This estimate reflects the costs for OAG to hire one assistant Attorney General to provide legal support for the program. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

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| Position | 1.0 |
| Salary and Fringe Benefits | \$156,691 |
| Other Operating Expenses | <u>7,656</u> |
| FY 2027 OAG Admin. Expenditures | \$164,347 |

Future year administrative expenditures for OAG, which range from \$164,755 in fiscal 2028 to \$179,428 by fiscal 2030, reflect a salary with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses

Other Agencies

OLA, the Department of State Police, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Department of Human Services can handle the bill’s requirements with existing budgeted resources.

Local Fiscal Effect: Local government expenditures may increase minimally for local agencies, including law enforcement agencies, housing authorities, and social services agencies, to provide comprehensive services to victims in the program in collaboration with VSU. Local government revenues may increase minimally to the extent any funds are provided for those services from the Gun Violence Victim Relocation Program Fund.

Small Business Effect: There is a potential meaningful impact for small businesses to the extent that victims use funding received from the program for the services of small businesses.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 974 and SB 921 of 2023.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Harford and Talbot counties; Maryland Association of Counties; cities of College Park and Rockville; Maryland Municipal League; Office of the Attorney General (Consumer Protection Division); Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy; Department of Budget and Management; Department of Housing and Community Development; Department of Human Services; Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 27, 2025
km/lgc

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