

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 1472 (Delegates Metzgar and McComas)
 Health and Government Operations

State Government - State House Trust - Ten Commandments Monument Display Act

This bill establishes (1) the Ten Commandments Monument Display Act, which requires that a suitable monument of the Ten Commandments be placed on the grounds of the Maryland State House and (2) a Commission on the Ten Commandments Monument that, among other things, must develop and implement a process for a monument of the Ten Commandments to be designed, constructed, and placed on the Maryland State House grounds by a private entity at no cost to the State. The Commission on Artistic Property must oversee the care and maintenance of the monument. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025. The provisions that establish the commission, and certain related provisions, terminate June 30, 2028.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: No effect is assumed in FY 2026. General fund expenditures increase by at least \$4,000 in FY 2027, and biennially thereafter, for the care and maintenance of the monument. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	0	4,000	0	4,000	0
Net Effect	\$0	(\$4,000)	\$0	(\$4,000)	\$0

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

Local Effect: The bill does not directly affect local government finances.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Suitable Monument of the Ten Commandments

The bill requires a suitable monument of the Ten Commandments to be placed on the grounds of the Maryland State House and specifies the text of the Ten Commandments the monument must contain. The Commission on Artistic Property must oversee the care and maintenance of the monument after it is placed on the grounds of the Maryland State House. The bill establishes that these provisions may be cited as the Ten Commandments Monument Display Act.

Commission on the Ten Commandments Monument

The bill also establishes a Commission on the Ten Commandments Monument staffed by the Division of Historical and Cultural Programs within the Maryland Department of Planning in consultation with other appropriate agencies, including the State House Trust, the Maryland State Arts Council, and the Department of General Services. The commission must:

- as soon as practicable, but not later than December 31, 2025, develop and implement a process for the design, construction, and placement of a monument of the Ten Commandments on the grounds of the Maryland State House by a private entity at no cost to the State;
- advise the Governor, the General Assembly, and State agencies on matters relating to the monument;
- perform other duties necessary to approve the design and site selection for the monument, including arranging for placement of the monument in a location where there are no other monuments; and
- complete all of its duties by June 30, 2027.

A member of the commission may not receive compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations, as provided in the State budget.

In the event that the legality or constitutionality of the monument is challenged in court, the Attorney General may (1) prepare and present a legal defense of the monument or (2) request the assistance of a nonprofit legal organization that specializes in First Amendment cases to prepare and present a legal defense of the monument.

The placement of the monument may not be construed to mean that the State favors any particular religion or denomination over others.

Current Law:

Commission on Artistic Property

There is a Commission on Artistic Property in the Maryland State Archives (MSA). The commission is the official custodian of all valuable paintings and other objects of decorative art owned by or loaned to the State, except those located in a State room of the Government House. The commission is responsible for the acquisition, custody, display, location, preservation, proper care, security, and restoration of the objects in its official custody.

Each person or agency that desires to acquire a painting or object of decorative art for display in or on the premises of any State building, except in a room of the Government House, must receive both prior approval and final acceptance from the commission. Before giving prior approval or final acceptance, the commission must consider (1) the competence of the artist; (2) the proposed location of the object; and (3) the quality, historical significance, and appropriateness of the work.

State House Trust

The State House Trust consists of the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the Chairman of the Maryland Historical Trust (or the chairman's designee), and up to three nonvoting associate members with experience and interest in historic preservation. The trust is responsible for, among other things, (1) the restoration and preservation of the State House and (2) disapproval or approval, and supervision, of any proposed repair, improvement, or other change to the State House or to any other building within State Circle.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase for MSA by at least \$4,000 in fiscal 2027, and biennially thereafter, for the care and maintenance of the monument. This estimate reflects minimum costs, without knowing the media from which the monument is made, and assumes that (1) the Commission on Artistic Property is responsible for the costs of the care and maintenance of the monument; (2) the care and maintenance begin in fiscal 2027; and (3) the monument is designed, constructed, and placed on the grounds of the Maryland State House by a private entity at no cost to the State.

Small Business Effect: Any small businesses that are involved in the design, construction, and placement of the monument may meaningfully benefit from the bill.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Office of the Attorney General; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of Budget and Management; Department of General Services; Maryland Department of Planning; Maryland State Archives; Department of Legislative Services

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