

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 73 (Senator Simonaire, *et al.*)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program - Renaming

This bill renames the Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program to be the Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps Program.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not directly affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program is administered by the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) in consultation with the Chesapeake Conservation Corps Board. Statute establishes various purposes of the program, including:

- promoting, preserving, protecting, and sustaining the environment;
- providing young adults with opportunities to become better citizens, students, and workers through meaningful service to their communities and the State;
- mobilizing, educating, and training youth and young adults to work with communities and schools to promote energy conservation and mitigate and prevent threats to the environment;

- mobilizing, educating, and training youth and young adults to deploy clean energy technology and mitigate and prevent the environmental and health impacts of climate impacts in communities disproportionately affected by climate impacts;
- ensuring underserved and geographical climate disparities populations are given assistance needed to prepare for and adapt to climate impacts;
- providing a green career ladder and opportunities for all youth and young adults, especially those most at risk, to be exposed to and trained in the energy efficiency, environmental protection, governmental and regulatory administration, and renewable energy generation sectors;
- educating and training communities and individuals for the long-term action needed to continue to promote, preserve, protect, and sustain the environment after a Corps project has been completed;
- acting as a coordinator and facilitator of efforts to foster public-private partnerships in developing “green-collar” job opportunities and in enhancing and expanding the workforce available for environmental protection and clean energy industries; and
- channeling available public and private resources to the protection, conservation, and preservation of the environment of the State.

CBT, in consultation with the Corps Board, must make grants to qualified organizations for the creation or expansion of full- or part-time programs that engage and develop volunteers and stipend volunteers in environmental and energy conservation projects.

For stipend volunteer programs, CBT and qualified organizations must principally recruit individuals for a minimum 6-month commitment who, at the time of enrollment, are ages 18-25 (or ages 18-26 for programs developed to implement climate mitigation and clean energy projects). For summer volunteer programs, including summer stipend programs, CBT and qualified organizations must principally recruit individuals who, at the time of enrollment, are ages 15-18.

The Corps Program’s projects and activities must meet an identifiable public need:

- with specific emphasis on projects that result in long-term preservation, protection, and conservation of the environment, in areas including environmental restoration, agriculture/forestry, infrastructure, and educational improvements; or
- within a community disproportionately affected by climate impacts, with specific emphasis on climate mitigation and clean energy projects that result in long-term reductions to greenhouse gas emissions and improvements to public health and the environment.

Statute provides various examples of specific types of projects that can be undertaken in the areas of (1) environmental restoration; (2) agriculture/forestry; (3) infrastructure; (4) education; (5) energy conservation; (6) climate mitigation; and (7) clean energy.

Chapter 38 of 2022 (the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022) added climate mitigation and clean energy to the Corps Program's purpose and focus (the program currently operates as the "Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps") and established an annual mandated appropriation, beginning in fiscal 2024, of \$1.5 million to CBT for the Corps Program to implement climate mitigation and clean energy projects.

Additional Comments: Former Maryland Senate President (1987-2020) Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. sponsored Senate Bill 311 of 2010, enacted as Chapter 275 of 2010, which, along with Chapter 276 of 2010, created the Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources; Department of Service and Civic Innovation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 29, 2025
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