

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

Senate Bill 85

(Senators Simonaire and M. Jackson)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Health and Government Operations

Braille Flag Memorial Act of 2025

This bill requires the Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) to designate a location for an “American braille tactile flag” to be placed on one or more State veterans’ cemeteries as authorized by the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families to honor members of the uniformed services, veterans, and other individuals in the State who are blind or visually impaired. “American braille tactile flag” means a tactile flag designed to allow blind people to experience the American Flag, including a flag created by the Kansas Braille Transcription Institute.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: As the bill only requires DVMF to *designate* a location for an American braille tactile flag, DVMF can handle the bill’s requirements with existing resources, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: DVMF is authorized to establish one or more cemeteries in the State for the burial of veterans and their eligible spouse or dependents as authorized by the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families. DVMF’s Cemetery Program operates and maintains five veterans’ cemeteries to provide for their internment.

To qualify for a plot in a State veterans' cemetery, an applicant must be a veteran who meets the requirements for burial at a national veterans' cemetery or an eligible spouse or dependent of a veteran who meets specified requirements. In addition, if the applicant is a veteran, the veteran must have been a resident of the State when the veteran entered the U.S. Armed Forces; when the veteran died; or for two years, unless DVMF waives the time period. DVMF must provide a grave liner at no cost to the veteran, eligible spouse, or dependent. In addition, DVMF must bury the veteran, eligible spouse, or dependent without charge.

State Fiscal Effect: The bill requires DVMF to *designate* a location for an American braille tactile flag to be placed in one or more State veterans' cemeteries. As the bill does not require DVMF to *install* an American braille tactile flag, DVMF can designate at least one location with existing resources. To the extent DVMF *installs* an American braille tactile flag at one or more State veterans' cemeteries, general fund expenditures increase by an indeterminate amount to purchase American braille tactile flag(s), installs the flag(s), and maintain the installation(s).

For illustrative purposes only, American braille tactile flags from the Kansas Braille Transcription Institute range in price from \$250 for a full-color polymer flag with programmable audio functioning suitable for permanent indoor display to \$850 for a bronze flag suitable for permanent indoor or outdoor display.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: HB 455 (Delegate Kaiser, *et al.*) - Health and Government Operations.

Information Source(s): Department of Veterans and Military Families; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 26, 2025
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