

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1066 (Delegates Ruth and Guzzone)
 Health and Government Operations

Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access - Membership and Workgroups

This bill adds seven members to the Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access and requires the commission to establish an additional workgroup on improvement of health, social, and economic outcomes related to substance use. The workgroup must evaluate and review specified issues and make recommendations on changes to State laws, policies, and practices needed to mitigate the harms related to the criminalization of substance use with the goal of improving the public health and safety of residents of the State.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) general fund expenditures increase by \$38,000 in FY 2026 and \$39,600 in FY 2027 for contractual staff to support the workgroup, as discussed below. Future years reflect termination of the positions consistent with the termination of the commission at the end of FY 2027. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	38,000	39,600	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$38,000)	(\$39,600)	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Commission membership is expanded to include (1) one representative of a provider of harm reduction services; (2) one individual with expertise in providing housing options for individuals who have or had a substance use disorder (SUD); (3) one individual with expertise in providing health care services to individuals experiencing homelessness; (4) one individual with prior lived experience with an SUD; (5) one individual with experience seeking or receiving treatment for an SUD while incarcerated; (6) one individual with experience as a participant in a drug court program; and (7) one individual with expertise in drug policy reform.

The workgroup must evaluate and review:

- the availability, affordability, and accessibility of treatment for SUD and recovery support services, including housing and employment services, in the State;
- the number and percentage of individuals directed to SUD and recovery support services by the Maryland criminal justice system;
- the health outcomes after receiving SUD and recovery support services, disaggregated by whether the services were sought voluntarily or mandated;
- the impact of current criminal justice involvement related to substance use in the State on health and well-being;
- the cost to State and local governments resulting from current criminal justice involvement related to substance use in the State;
- the equitable application of current criminal justice involvement related to substance use in the State;
- current research on the efficacy of voluntary treatment for SUDs compared to treatment mandated by criminal justice systems, including systems outside the State; and
- the availability and accessibility of data on the aforementioned issues.

As with current commission workgroups under current law, the workgroup must include members of the commission, meet at least twice annually, and by July 1 each year, report and make recommendations to the commission and the Behavioral Health Advisory Council.

Current Law: Chapters 290 and 291 of 2023 established the commission to make recommendations to provide appropriate, accessible, and comprehensive behavioral health services that are available on demand to individuals in the State across the behavioral health continuum.

The commission must establish workgroups that must meet at least twice per year and include members of the commission. The established workgroups may also include individuals invited by the commission and the Behavioral Health Advisory Council. The workgroups include (1) the geriatric behavioral health workgroup; (2) the youth behavioral health, individuals with developmental disabilities, and individuals with complex behavioral health needs workgroup; (3) the criminal justice-involved behavioral health workgroup; and (4) the behavioral health workforce development, infrastructure, coordination, and financing workgroup. By July 1 each year, the workgroups must report and make recommendations to the commission and the Behavioral Health Advisory Council.

The commission must meet at least three times annually and report its findings and recommendations by January 1 each year. The annual report must include funding and legislative recommendations that are consistent with providing appropriate, accessible, and comprehensive behavioral health services that are available on demand to individuals in the State across the behavioral health spectrum. Any legislative recommendations that require funding must also include an estimate of the funding required and information that supports the estimate.

The commission must also meet jointly with the Behavioral Health Advisory Council at least three times per year as mutually determined. The commission must coordinate with the council in submitting its annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 1 each year.

Per Chapters 290 and 291, the commission is scheduled to terminate June 30, 2027.

State Expenditures: Given the specific duties of the workgroup established under the bill and the requirement that the workgroup make specified recommendations (neither of which are required of existing workgroups), MDH advises that additional contractual resources are required to staff the workgroup.

Thus, MDH general fund expenditures increase by \$38,019 in fiscal 2026, which reflects the bill's October 1, 2025 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one part-time (50%) contractual health policy analyst to staff the new workgroup. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Contractual Position	0.5
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$31,064
Operating Expenses	<u>6,955</u>
Total FY 2026 State Expenditures	\$38,019

Future year expenditures reflect a full salary with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses and assume termination of the contractual position on June 30, 2027, consistent with the termination of the commission.

This estimate does not include any health insurance costs that could be incurred for specified contractual employees under the State's implementation of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Office of the Public Defender; Department of Legislative Services

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