

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 67
Finance

(Senators Simonaire and Jackson)

Health Occupations Boards - Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits

This bill authorizes each health occupations board to establish a process to (1) include a notation of an individual's veteran status on a license, certificate, or registration and (2) assist in determining eligibility for State and federal veterans benefits. The bill establishes additional specifications for any process implemented by a board.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Maryland Department of Health (MDH) special fund expenditures may increase, likely minimally, to the extent that health occupations boards opt to create the process authorized by the bill. The bill is not anticipated to otherwise materially impact State operations or finances, as discussed below.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially impact local government operations or finances, as discussed below.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: If a health occupations board establishes the process authorized by the bill, an application for a professional license, certificate, or registration must allow an applicant to indicate consent to (1) having a notation of veteran status on the applicant's credential and (2) being contacted by appropriate Executive Branch agencies about eligibility for State or federal veterans benefits. If an applicant submits the appropriate documentation and required consent, the board must include the notation of veteran status on the applicant's license, certificate, or registration. On request from an Executive Branch agency, and in accordance with the Maryland Public Information Act, a board must

electronically transmit appropriate information about the applicant relevant to determining the applicant's eligibility for State or federal veterans benefits. Each health occupations board may adopt regulations related to the bill.

Current Law:

Health Occupations Boards

Within MDH, 20 health occupations boards share responsibility for regulating various health professions in the State, as shown in **Exhibit 1**. Generally, an individual must be licensed, certified, registered, or permitted by the appropriate board before practicing; licensure, certification, registration, and permit requirements vary by profession but typically require, among other things, specified education and experience, passage of a national and/or State examination, and a Criminal History Records Check (CHRC).

Exhibit 1
Health Occupations Boards in the Maryland Department of Health

Acupuncture
Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Music Therapists
Chiropractic
Dental
Dietetic Practice
Environmental Health Specialists
Long-Term Care Administrators (formerly Nursing Home Administrators)
Massage Therapy
Morticians and Funeral Directors
Nursing
Occupational Therapy
Optometry
Pharmacy
Physical Therapy
Physicians
Podiatry
Professional Counselors and Therapists
Psychologists
Residential Child Care Program Professionals
Social Work

Source: Department of Legislative Services

Chapters 154 and 155 of 2013 (also known as the Veterans Full Employment Act of 2013) require health occupations boards to expedite the licensure, certification, or registration of a service member, veteran, or military spouse. The boards must also assign an advisor to assist the individual with the application process and provide specified information to assist in the licensing, certification, or registration process. MDH must also credit specified military training and education completed by a service member toward licensure or certification requirements.

If a service member, veteran, or military spouse meets the requirements for licensure, certification, or registration, each health occupations board must expedite the process and issue the credential within 15 days after receiving a completed application. If a board determines that they do not meet the education, training, or experience requirements for licensure, certification, or registration, a representative of the board must assist the individual in identifying programs that offer relevant education, training or ways of obtaining needed experience.

Each health occupations board must publish information on its website related to the expedited licensing process and any related assistance and services provided by the board to service members, veterans, and military spouses. In addition, each health occupations board may allow a licensee or certificate holder who is a member the U.S. Armed Forces deployed outside the United States or its territories to (1) renew the license or certificate after the expiration of the renewal period without payment of a penalty or reinstatement fee if the late renewal is a direct result of the deployment and (2) complete any continuing education or continuing professional competency requirements or CHRC required for licensure within a reasonable time after renewing the license or certificate.

Department of Veterans and Military Families

The Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) exists as a principal department of State government and is responsible for, among other duties, delivering services and programs to assist the State's veterans, their families, and survivors in obtaining State, federal, and local benefits provided by law in recognition for their service.

State and Local Fiscal Effect: The bill authorizes, rather than requires, health occupations boards to establish a specified process related to veteran status. To the extent that any board chooses to implement the process, special fund expenditures may increase by an indeterminate, but likely minimal amount. Revenues are not affected.

Boards that opt to create the process authorized by the bill are expected to require upgrades to their licensing or software systems to account for the processing and publishing of new information related to veteran status; accordingly, such boards may incur programming costs. For example, the State Board of Nursing (MBON) estimates a one-time \$1,500 cost

to update its licensing system (an amount the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) advises is likely absorbable within existing budgeted resources). The Board of Pharmacy and Board of Dental Examiners (BDE) anticipate indeterminate increased expenditures to update their systems; however, neither board is able to provide an estimate of such costs. DLS advises that any programming costs are likely limited to the initial year of any implementation, which may vary by board.

Some boards also advise of the need for additional staff should they implement the process authorized by the bill. For instance, BDE advises of the need to hire one administrative specialist, incurring an estimated cost of \$53,488 in fiscal 2026 and increasing to approximately \$69,300 in fiscal 2030. According to BDE, the administrative specialist would be responsible for reviewing individual documents to validate veteran information as submitted. MBON estimates expenditures of \$374,900 in fiscal 2026 and increasing to \$491,864 in fiscal 2030, to account for hiring six administrative specialists. According to MBON, such staff are needed to review veteran documents and determine benefit eligibility.

While some boards *may* initially incur minimal administrative costs, such as those associated with the development of any process and training staff on implemented procedures, DLS disagrees that additional staff are required, as the bill does not create extensive, ongoing administrative requirements for the boards that choose to implement the process. For example, as outlined in the bill, in order for an applicant to receive a veteran status on a credential, the applicant must present documentation *acceptable to the board*; the bill specifies examples of such potential documentation, including a certification of veteran status obtained from DVMF or a specified federal form certifying veteran status. Thus, DLS assumes that any process implemented by a board can require an applicant seeking a veteran status credential to provide standard certification that readily identifies an applicant as a veteran, reducing the need for board staff to engage in extensive documentation review. DLS also notes that because health occupations boards are already required under current law (discussed above) to provide special privileges to veterans during the licensing process, it is assumed that board staff have some familiarity with relevant documentation that may be presented by a veteran under the bill.

Further, while DLS acknowledges that certain health occupations boards oversee a large volume of licensees, it also notes that approximately 321,000 veterans are estimated to live in Maryland. This estimate assumes that the number of these veterans who are subject to the health occupations boards (and also interested in adding the veteran notation to their credential) is limited enough that any additional administrative responsibilities generated by the bill are able to be handled by existing staff. DLS also advises that any applications for veteran status (and requests for information from Executive Branch agencies) are likely to be staggered in a way that further mitigates any meaningful operational or fiscal impact exclusively attributable to the bill.

Additional Impacts

Although the bill's provisions may facilitate additional veterans applying and being deemed eligible for certain benefits, any associated impact is not anticipated to materially affect State or local finances or operations.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs; Department of Commerce; Maryland Higher Education Commission; Maryland Department of the Environment; Maryland Department of Health; Maryland Department of Labor; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Veterans and Military Families; State Department of Assessments and Taxation; Maryland Insurance Administration; Department of Legislative Services

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