

SENATE BILL 539

K3, C8

6lr0755
CF 6lr3413

By: Senator Smith

Introduced and read first time: February 4, 2026

Assigned to: Finance

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Department of Social and Economic Mobility – Workforce Opportunities Grant**
3 **Program and Fund**

4 FOR the purpose of establishing the Workforce Opportunities Grant Program to provide
5 grants to certain organizations to support the planning and execution of workforce
6 events and job fairs in the State; establishing the Workforce Opportunities Grant
7 Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund to support the Program; requiring that interest
8 earnings be credited to the Fund; and generally relating to the Workforce
9 Opportunities Grant Program and Fund.

10 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
11 Article – State Finance and Procurement
12 Section 6–226(a)(2)(i) and (ii)
13 Annotated Code of Maryland
14 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

15 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
16 Article – State Finance and Procurement
17 Section 6–226(a)(2)(iii)212. and 213.
18 Annotated Code of Maryland
19 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

20 BY adding to
21 Article – State Finance and Procurement
22 Section 6–226(a)(2)(iii)214.
23 Annotated Code of Maryland
24 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

25 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
26 Article – State Government
27 Section 9–4103

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 Annotated Code of Maryland
2 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

3 BY adding to
4 Article – State Government
5 Section 9–4125 through 9–4129 to be under the new part “Part IV. Workforce
6 Opportunities Grant Program”
7 Annotated Code of Maryland
8 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

9 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
10 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

11 **Article – State Finance and Procurement**

12 6–226.

13 (a) (2) (i) This paragraph does not apply in fiscal years 2024 through 2028.

14 (ii) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, and unless
15 inconsistent with a federal law, grant agreement, or other federal requirement or with the
16 terms of a gift or settlement agreement, net interest on all State money allocated by the
17 State Treasurer under this section to special funds or accounts, and otherwise entitled to
18 receive interest earnings, as accounted for by the Comptroller, shall accrue to the General
19 Fund of the State.

20 (iii) The provisions of subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph do not
21 apply to the following funds:

22 212. the Department of Social and Economic Mobility Special
23 Fund; [and]

24 213. the Population Health Improvement Fund; AND

25 **214. THE WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES GRANT FUND.**

26 **Article – State Government**

27 9–4103.

28 (a) The purpose of the Department is to:

29 (1) provide support for units of State government, individuals, and
30 businesses for the maintenance of social equity policies in the State;

31 (2) monitor trends in social equity programs and policies across the nation;

- (3) propose new and innovative approaches to social equity programs;
- (4) compile and produce reports and recommendations related to social equity programs in the State for which it is the successor;
- (5) ensure the fulfillment of the roles and responsibilities of the entities
- (6) track the performance of social equity programs and small or
ed business assistance programs;
- (7) promote and encourage full participation in the regulated cannabis
individuals from communities that have previously been disproportionately
the war on drugs in order to positively impact those communities and other
ned to the Office of Social Equity established under this subtitle;
- (8) support small or disadvantaged businesses in the State through all
ned to the [Governor's] Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs;

1 (v) providing technical assistance to units; and

2 (3) adopt regulations to carry out this subtitle.

3 **9-4123. RESERVED.**

4 **9-4124. RESERVED.**

5 **PART IV. WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES GRANT PROGRAM.**

6 **9-4125.**

7 (A) IN THIS PART THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS
8 INDICATED.

9 (B) "FUND" MEANS THE WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES GRANT FUND.

10 (C) "PROGRAM" MEANS THE WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES GRANT
11 PROGRAM.

12 **9-4126.**

13 (A) THERE IS A WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES GRANT PROGRAM IN THE
14 DEPARTMENT.

15 (B) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM.

16 (C) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO PROVIDE GRANTS TO SUPPORT
17 THE PLANNING AND EXECUTION OF WORKFORCE EVENTS AND JOB FAIRS IN THE
18 STATE THAT CONNECT JOB SEEKERS WITH EMPLOYERS.

19 **9-4127.**

20 (A) SUBJECT TO THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAM, THE
21 DEPARTMENT SHALL ESTABLISH AN APPLICATION PROCESS THAT AWARDS GRANTS
22 ON A COMPETITIVE BASIS TO NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, LOCAL WORKFORCE
23 BOARDS, AND PARTNERSHIPS THAT INCLUDE EMPLOYERS, COMMUNITY
24 ORGANIZATIONS, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS THAT:

25 (1) REGULARLY WORK WITH SMALL AND LARGE EMPLOYERS FROM
26 MULTIPLE INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS ACROSS THE STATE;

3 (3) HAVE EXPERIENCE ORGANIZING EVENTS AND WORKING WITH
4 EMPLOYERS WHO HAVE THE ABILITY TO HIRE JOB SEEKERS; AND

5 (4) HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CONNECT JOB SEEKERS DIRECTLY WITH
6 EMPLOYERS FROM MULTIPLE INDUSTRIES.

7 (B) AN ORGANIZATION THAT IS AWARDED A GRANT UNDER THE PROGRAM
8 MAY USE THE FUNDS FOR:

9 (1) OUTREACH;

10 (2) LOGISTICS;

12 (4) SUPPORT SERVICES;

14 (6) EVENT COORDINATION.

15 9-4128.

16 (A) THERE IS A WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES GRANT FUND.

17 (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE FUND IS TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAM.

18 (C) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADMINISTER THE FUND.

19 (D) (1) THE FUND IS A SPECIAL, NONLAPSING FUND THAT IS NOT
20 SUBJECT TO § 7-302 OF THE STATE FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT ARTICLE.

23 (E) THE FUND CONSISTS OF:

(1) MONEY APPROPRIATED IN THE STATE BUDGET TO THE FUND;

25 (2) INTEREST EARNINGS; AND

3 (F) THE FUND MAY BE USED ONLY FOR PROGRAM PURPOSES.

4 (G) ANY INTEREST EARNINGS OF THE FUND SHALL BE CREDITED TO THE
5 FUND.

6 (H) THE STATE TREASURER SHALL INVEST THE MONEY OF THE FUND IN
7 THE SAME MANNER AS OTHER STATE MONEY MAY BE INVESTED.

8 (I) EXPENDITURES FROM THE FUND MAY BE MADE ONLY IN ACCORDANCE
9 WITH THE STATE BUDGET.

10 (J) FOR EACH OF FISCAL YEARS 2028 THROUGH 2030, THE GOVERNOR
11 SHALL INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF AT LEAST
12 \$500,000 FOR THE FUND.

13 9-4129.

17 (B) THE REPORT SUBMITTED UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION
18 SHALL INCLUDE:

25 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
26 October 1, 2026. It shall remain effective for a period of 5 years and, at the end of September
27 30, 2031, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be
28 abrogated and of no further force and effect.