

# SENATE BILL 539

K3, C8

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CF 6lr3413

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By: **Senator Smith**

Introduced and read first time: February 4, 2026

Assigned to: Finance

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## 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

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



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

BY adding to

Article – State Government

Section 9–4125 through 9–4129 to be under the new part “Part IV. Workforce  
Opportunities Grant Program”

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

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

### **Article – State Finance and Procurement**

6–226.

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

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

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

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

213. the Population Health Improvement Fund; AND

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

### **Article – State Government**

9–4103.

(a) The purpose of the Department is to:

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

(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;

(5) ensure the fulfillment of the roles and responsibilities of the entities and social equity programs in the State for which it is the successor;

(6) track the performance of social equity programs and small or disadvantaged business assistance programs;

(7) promote and encourage full participation in the regulated cannabis industry by individuals from communities that have previously been disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs in order to positively impact those communities and other duties assigned to the Office of Social Equity established under this subtitle;

(8) support small or disadvantaged businesses in the State through all duties assigned to the [Governor's] Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs; [and]

(9) carry out the duties of the Office of Minority Business Enterprises within the Maryland Department of Transportation, including duties assigned to support small or disadvantaged businesses; AND

**(10) OVERSEE AND ADMINISTER THE WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES GRANT PROGRAM AND WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES GRANT FUND.**

(b) The Department shall:

(1) connect a person with programs in State, federal, and local government that serve designated populations to ensure the person is connected to programs and other opportunities the person is eligible for;

(2) provide units of State government with assistance related to the purpose of the Department by:

(i) facilitating information sharing between units;

(ii) maintaining an inventory of social equity work performed by each unit and relevant reports from those units;

(iii) conducting policy analyses on social equity and the effectiveness of social equity programs;

(iv) adopting standards for units to promote social equity; and

(v) providing technical assistance to units; and

(3) adopt regulations to carry out this subtitle.

**9-4123. RESERVED.**

**9-4124. RESERVED.**

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

**9-4125.**

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

(B) “FUND” MEANS THE WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES GRANT FUND.

(C) “PROGRAM” MEANS THE WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES GRANT PROGRAM.

**9-4126.**

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

(B) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM.

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

**9-4127.**

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

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

1           **(2) CAN CONDUCT WORKFORCE EVENTS OR JOB FAIRS IN MULTIPLE**  
2 **REGIONS OF THE STATE THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE TO JOB SEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS;**

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;**

11          **(3) VENUES;**

12          **(4) SUPPORT SERVICES;**

13          **(5) STAFFING; AND**

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.**

21           **(2) THE STATE TREASURER SHALL HOLD THE FUND SEPARATELY,**  
22 **AND THE COMPTROLLER SHALL ACCOUNT FOR THE FUND.**

23       **(E) THE FUND CONSISTS OF:**

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

25           **(2) INTEREST EARNINGS; AND**

**(3) ANY OTHER MONEY FROM ANY OTHER SOURCE ACCEPTED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE FUND.**

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

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

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

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

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

**9-4129.**

**(A) ON OR BEFORE JANUARY 1 EACH YEAR, BEGINNING IN 2028, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT ON THE PROGRAM TO THE GOVERNOR AND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1257 OF THIS ARTICLE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.**

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

**(1) THE NUMBER AND LOCATION OF EVENTS HELD USING GRANT FUNDS AWARDED UNDER THE PROGRAM;**

**(2) THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS AND JOB SEEKERS PARTICIPATING IN EVENTS SUPPORTED BY GRANT FUNDS AWARDED UNDER THE PROGRAM; AND**

**(3) DATA ON JOB PLACEMENTS AND HIRES RESULTING FROM EVENTS SUPPORTED BY GRANT FUNDS AWARDED UNDER THE PROGRAM.**

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