

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 473

(Senators Hettleman and Love)

Finance

**Public Utilities - For-Hire Drivers and Transportation Network Operators -
Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention Training and Liability**

This bill requires an applicant for a local taxicab driver's license, State for-hire driver's license, or State transportation network operator (TNO) license to include in the license application documentation verifying that the applicant completed a human trafficking awareness training program and a human trafficking prevention program, as specified. The bill makes conforming changes to clarify that completion of the required training is generally a condition of licensure, as specified. The bill further specifies that a licensed taxicab driver, for-hire driver, or TNO may not be held civilly or criminally liable for reporting or responding in good faith to a suspected incident of human trafficking.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund expenditures for the Public Service Commission (PSC) increase by \$10,000 in FY 2027 only. Special fund revenues increase correspondingly from assessments imposed on public service companies.

(in dollars)	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
SF Revenue	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SF Expenditure	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net Effect	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Local Effect: It is anticipated that affected local governments can handle the bill's requirements using existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill's requirements apply to an applicant for a (1) permanent or temporary for-hire driver's license from PSC, including for a license renewal; (2) permanent or temporary TNO license from PSC, including for a license renewal, as applicable; and (3) taxicab driver's license from a county or municipality. Any such applicant must include in the application documentation verifying that the applicant completed:

- the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Leaders Against Human Trafficking/Combating Human Trafficking in the Transportation Awareness Training [sic] or any nationally recognized human trafficking awareness training program; and
- a human trafficking prevention program that provides information on how to (1) recognize potential victims of human trafficking; (2) respond to an individual who may be or is a victim of human trafficking; and (3) connect an individual who may be or is a victim of human trafficking with available resources.

The bill makes conforming changes to clarify that completion of the training and program is generally a condition of licensure by:

- specifying that a local jurisdiction may license taxicab drivers if, at a minimum, the local jurisdiction conducts the criminal history and driving record checks required by current law *and* requires each applicant for a license to include in the application documentation verifying that the applicant completed the training required by the bill;
- explicitly authorizing PSC to approve an applicant and issue a temporary or permanent for-hire driver's license if the applicant meets existing eligibility requirements *and* submits documentation verifying completion of the training required by the bill; and
- explicitly authorizing PSC to approve an applicant and issue a permanent or temporary TNO license if the applicant meets existing eligibility requirements *and* submits documentation verifying completion of the training required by the bill.

Current Law:

State Licensing for Taxicab and For-Hire Drivers and Transportation Network Operators

Except for taxicab drivers licensed by a county or municipality and certain individuals who provide transportation services in the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit District, a

person may not operate a motor vehicle for hire in the State unless the person holds a for-hire driver's license or a TNO license issued by PSC.

Taxicab and For-Hire Licensing: An applicant for a for-hire driver's license (which includes a passenger-for-hire license and a taxicab driver's license) must submit a completed application to PSC on the form provided by PSC, include specified information with the application, pay an application fee, and apply to the Criminal Justice Information System Central Repository of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services for a criminal history records check.

Generally, PSC may approve an applicant and issue a temporary driver's license to the applicant if (1) all information required for the application is provided and (2) PSC is satisfied with the successful submission of an applicant's national criminal history records check and driving record check, as specified. PSC may issue a permanent for-hire driver's license to an applicant on the submission of a satisfactory supplemental criminal background check; however, for taxicab services, the supplemental check must be submitted within 30 days of the issuance of a temporary license.

The term of a for-hire driver's license is not less than one year and no more than three years, as set by PSC. An applicant for a renewal of a for-hire driver's license must submit an application on the form that PSC provides. PSC may renew the license by appropriate endorsement on the license.

Transportation Network Operator Licensing: PSC may approve an applicant to be a TNO and issue a temporary TNO license if the applicant provides all information PSC requires for the application, including a national criminal history records check and a driving record check, as specified, and PSC is satisfied with the results. PSC may issue a permanent TNO license to an applicant on the submission of a satisfactory supplemental criminal background check.

Local Licensing for Certain Taxicab Drivers

A county or municipality may license taxicab drivers who drive taxicabs that are based in that county or municipality if, at a minimum, the county or municipality conducts a criminal record check and driving record check of each applicant for a license. A taxicab driver licensed by a county or municipality is not required to be licensed by PSC.

Human Trafficking Awareness Training

Numerous government entities and licensed businesses in the State are required to provide, approve, and/or receive training on the identification and reporting of human trafficking.

For example:

- the Maryland State Department of Education is required to collaborate with the Maryland Department of Health to provide awareness and training for Directors of Student Services in local education agencies on human trafficking, including strategies for the prevention of trafficking of children;
- a commercial driver's license training school is required to include, as part of its curriculum, education and training on the recognition, prevention, and effective reporting of human trafficking;
- each innkeeper must provide a new employee with an annual training for the accurate and prompt identification and reporting of suspected human trafficking (any such training program must be approved by the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy and the Maryland Department of Labor); and
- Chapter 437 of 2025 requires the Maryland Department of Transportation to develop or identify and implement a human trafficking awareness training program and administer the training program to specified employees and contractors.

State Fiscal Effect: Special fund expenditures for PSC increase by \$10,000 in fiscal 2027 only for a one-time modification to its online application software for for-hire drivers and TNOs to ensure that affected applicants view the [U.S. DOT Leaders Against Human Trafficking Initiative's Combating Human Trafficking in the Transportation Sector Awareness Training](#) (which is available for free online) as part of the application process.

PSC advises, and the Department of Legislative Services concurs, that the information provided in the U.S. DOT training likely also meets the bill's requirement that for-hire drivers and TNOs participate in a human trafficking prevention program, as the U.S. DOT training includes information on how to recognize instances of human trafficking and what to do in response. However, to the extent that an additional training is required to meet the bill's requirements, PSC can likely identify and include an additional training program in its application process for minimal or no additional cost, as free trainings and resources are available online.

PSC is funded through an assessment on the public service companies that it regulates. As a result, special fund revenues for PSC increase correspondingly from assessments imposed on public service companies.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: HB 829 (Delegate Ebersole, *et al.*) - Environment and Transportation.

Information Source(s): Public Service Commission; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Office of People's Counsel; Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Cecil, Frederick, and Somerset counties; Maryland Municipal League; U.S. Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

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sj/lgc

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