

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

Senate Bill 256 (Senators Gallion and Simonaire)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Economic Matters

State Board of Professional Landscape Architects - Revisions

This bill renames the State Board of Examiners of Landscape Architects to be the State Board of Professional Landscape Architects. The bill also (1) substitutes the term “professional landscape architect” for “licensed landscape architect” throughout the statute; (2) alters qualifications for membership on the board as well as related duties; (3) repeals a requirement related to payment of an examination fee directly to the board; (4) alters and expands provisions related to the use of a testing service to administer the required examination; (5) authorizes the board to issue an *emeritus* status license to certain individuals; and (6) alters a permit requirement for certain businesses. The bill makes numerous other conforming, technical, and clarifying changes.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The State Board of Examiners of Landscape Architects can implement the bill’s changes with existing resources. Revenues are likely not materially affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary/Current Law:

Board of Examiners of Landscape Architects

The State Board of Examiners of Landscape Architects (the Board of Professional Landscape Architects under the bill) qualifies and licenses individuals seeking licensure and issues permits to business entities through which landscape architecture is practiced.

Under current law, the board consists of five members; three must be licensees, while two must be consumer members. The licensee members must have practiced landscape architecture in the State for at least 5 years. *The bill* requires two members to be professional landscape architects who have practiced landscape architecture for at least 10 years, with 5 years of experience as responsible charge, while the third must be a professional landscape architect who has practiced in the State for at least 5 years.

Miscellaneous Powers and Duties

Under current law, with the advice of the established landscape architect associations, the board must adopt, by regulation, a code of ethics for practicing landscape architecture. *The bill* repeals the requirement to consult with established associations in the development of the code of ethics.

List of Certificate Holders

Under current law, the board must (1) keep a list of the names and mailing addresses of all licensees and (2) provide each code official (*i.e.*, a public official responsible for the review of building permit documents or the issuance of building permits) with a copy of the list annually. *The bill* adds that access to the list must be provided to code officials upon request.

Licensing Requirements

Under current law, before an applicant takes the examination required for licensure, the applicant must qualify by meeting one of four categories of educational and experiential requirements. Under two options, an applicant qualifies by completing a degree from an institution accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. *The bill* repeals this requirement and instead requires accreditation by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Applications for Licenses

Under current law, an applicant for a license must (1) submit to the board an application on the appropriate form and (2) pay to the board (or the board's designee) a nonrefundable application fee set by the board and an examination fee set by the board (in an amount that must not exceed the cost of the examination). *The bill* repeals the requirement to pay the examination fee to the board; however, an applicant must continue to pay a nonrefundable application fee. The board advises that examination fees are paid directly to a third-party testing service.

Testing Requirements and Use of Testing Service

The bill generally recodifies and reorganizes provisions related to the use of a testing service to administer the required examination. However, certain provisions are modified. Notably, the bill repeals requirements that specify how the exam must be structured. If necessary to determine the competency of applicants, the board may use a testing service to administer supplemental examinations with additional subjects.

Continuing Professional Competency Requirement

The bill repeals certain provisions regarding the timing and fulfillment of continuing professional competency requirements. However, the board must continue to adopt regulations to require a licensee to demonstrate continuing professional competency by completing at least 24 hours of professional development activities as a condition of renewal of a license.

Emeritus Status

The bill authorizes the board to issue an *emeritus* status license to an individual who submits an application on the required form. The board may issue an *emeritus* status license if the individual:

- is currently licensed by the board to practice landscape architecture or was previously licensed by the board to practice landscape architecture and allowed the license to expire but is otherwise entitled to renewal at the time of expiration;
- has been a professional landscape architect for at least 25 years, of which at least 5 years have been in the State;
- is not the subject of any pending disciplinary action related to the practice of landscape architecture in the State or another state; and
- pays to the board a fee set by the board.

The holder of an *emeritus* status license may use the designation of “landscape architect emeritus” but may not engage in the practice of landscape architecture.

The board may reinstate the license to practice landscape architecture of the holder of an *emeritus* status license if the individual:

- submits to the board an application for reinstatement on the appropriate form;
- meets the continuing professional competency requirements for renewal of a license;

- is not the subject of any pending disciplinary action related to the practice of landscape architecture in the State or another state; and
- pays to the board a reinstatement fee set by the board.

Permit Required for Certain Businesses

Under current law, a corporation, partnership, or limited liability company must hold a permit issued by the board before it operates a business through which landscape architecture is practiced. However, a permit holder may provide landscape architectural services for itself or for an affiliated corporation, partnership, or limited liability company without a permit issued by the board. *The bill* repeals this exception.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: HB 485 (Delegate S. Johnson) - Economic Matters.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Labor; Department of Legislative Services

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