

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 198

(Senator A. Washington)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Prince George's Community College - Aerospace Technology Studies Program

This bill requires the Board of Community College Trustees for Prince George's County, in consultation with Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), the Maryland Department of Commerce, and the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation, to establish an Aerospace Technology Studies Program at Prince George's Community College (PGCC), subject to program approval by MHEC. By December 15, 2026, and each December 15 thereafter until the program has been established, the board of trustees must submit a report to MHEC, the Prince George's County Executive, the Maryland Aerospace Technology Commission, and the General Assembly on the status of establishing the program. By October 1 of each year after the program's establishment, the board of trustees must submit a report to those same entities on industry placements and outcomes of the program. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$71,900 in FY 2027 and \$81,700 in FY 2028 for MHEC to retain contractual support to assist PGCC in establishing the program and to provide technical expertise needed to make program approval determinations. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: PGCC expenditures increase significantly, as discussed below, to establish and implement an Aerospace Technology Studies Program. PGCC revenues increase to offset some of this cost following the establishment of the program from tuition and fees paid by program enrollees and from any grants awarded or donations made to the new program. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The Board of Community College Trustees for Prince George's County, in consultation with industry experts, must develop program curriculum to include aerospace systems technology, avionics and electronics, advanced manufacturing, and artificial intelligence in aerospace. The program must provide work-based learning and a pathway from high school to college and careers as specified. The Board of Community College Trustees for Prince George's County must enter a memorandum of understanding to establish formal industry partnerships with at least one aerospace and technology employer in Prince George's County.

Current Law: PGCC currently does not offer a [program of study](#) in aerospace technology, though it does offer degrees in related fields, like its Associate of Science Degree in Engineering.

Generally, MHEC must coordinate the overall growth and development of postsecondary education in the State. With respect to community colleges, MHEC must, among other things, ensure courses and programs offered are within the scope and mission of community colleges. In regards to program approval specifically, MHEC must review program proposals for public institutions of higher education and approve or disapprove program proposals for new programs and substantial modifications to existing programs. These processes are generally outlined in Maryland regulations (COMAR 13B.02.03).

Processes for Implementing New Academic Programs

There are two main processes for implementing new academic programs at institutions of higher education: one for new programs that can be implemented with existing resources; and another for new programs that will require additional resources. The processes are overseen by MHEC, and MHEC's determinations about program approval are not subject to judicial review or administrative appeal.

Chapter 963 of 2024 also requires MHEC to develop and implement a third program review process for new proposed programs that are offered *online only*. Chapter 143 of 2025 also restructured the process for *graduate-level* academic program approval and institutional mission statements based on identifying State and regional workforce needs.

Institutions of higher education seeking to implement new programs with new resources must submit proposals for the new programs to MHEC, and MHEC must approve or disapprove the programs or, in the case of private nonprofit and for-profit institutions of higher education, recommend that the programs be implemented or not implemented. If MHEC fails to act within 60 days of the date of submission of a completed proposal, the proposal is automatically deemed approved.

When a public or private nonprofit institution of higher education determines that it can implement a new program with existing resources, the president of the institution must submit the proposal to the institution's governing board and to MHEC, and MHEC must distribute the proposal to other institutions. MHEC or another institution may file an objection to the proposal based on (1) inconsistency with the mission of the institution proposing the program; (2) a lack of need for the program; (3) unreasonable program duplication that could cause harm to another institution; or (4) violation of the State's equal educational opportunity obligations (known as unnecessary program duplication). Based on those factors, MHEC must determine if an institution's objection is justified. If MHEC determines that an objection is justified, it must negotiate with the institution's governing board and president to modify the proposal. If the objection cannot be resolved within 30 days of receipt of an objection, MHEC must make a final determination about the approval of the proposed program for a public institution of higher education or a final recommendation on implementation for a private nonprofit institution of higher education.

Maryland Higher Education Commission – Program Evaluation Unit

Current law requires MHEC to establish a program evaluation unit, to evaluate new programs and substantial modifications, with at least 10 staff members. The unit established must assist MHEC in reviewing and evaluating proposals for new academic programs and substantial modifications of existing academic programs in accordance with law. The Governor must include in the annual operating budget an amount sufficient to employ the 10 staff members.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by \$71,869 in fiscal 2027 and \$81,731 in fiscal 2028, which accounts for a 90-day start-up delay from the bill's July 1, 2026 effective date and assumes MHEC approves a final Aerospace Technology Studies Program by the end of fiscal 2028.

MHEC has determined that one regular full-time position is needed to implement this bill. Specifically, MHEC advises that the new, permanent position may be required for both the initial program approval for the PGCC Aerospace Technology Studies Program *and* to expand MHEC's core team of "lighthouse sector" analysts that can use the program potentially established under the bill as a pilot to create standardized workforce reporting and curriculum-alignment protocols. However, the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) advises that the added responsibilities incurred by this legislation are not permanent and, thus, may be performed by contractual employees. While DLS concurs that MHEC may require technical support to consult on the initial development and approval of the Aerospace Technology Studies Program, the bill does not require ongoing support for any programs beyond the PGCC Aerospace Technology Studies Program. Therefore, this estimate reflects the cost of hiring one contractual workforce policy analyst to consult with

PGCC on the development of its new program and ensure MHEC has sufficient technical expertise to review the program once created. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses. This analysis also assumes that PGCC independently retain subject matter experts in the development of the Aerospace Technology Studies Program to also support the development of the program (discussed below in **Local Expenditures**).

Contractual Position	1.0
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$62,728
Operating Expenses	<u>9,141</u>
Total FY 2027 State Expenditures	\$71,869

Fiscal 2028 expenditures reflect full salary with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses. This analysis also assumes MHEC provides final approval to a PGCC Aerospace Technology Studies Program by the end of fiscal 2028 and that MHEC can handle the bill's reporting requirements once the program is established without the need for highly technical support staff.

This estimate does not include any health insurance costs that could be incurred for specified contractual employees under the State's implementation of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Local Revenues: PGCC's revenues increase to the extent students enroll in the newly established Aerospace Technology Studies Program. Exact revenues depend on the size and scope of the program offerings and the number of students enrolling.

For illustrative purposes only, PGCC estimates revenues of approximately \$168,000 in fiscal 2028 for the first year of program operation. This estimate assumes the college offers a (1) 16 credit-hour Manufacturing Technology Certificate; (2) 33 credit-hour Avionics Technician Certificate (completed at a rate of 16.5 credit hours each year); and (3) 48 credit-hour Aviation Maintenance Certificate (completed at a rate of 24 credit hours each year). It further assumes 25 students enroll in each of the three programs in the first year and a \$119 per credit hour tuition. Future year revenues depend on number of additional students enrolling and the cost per credit hour charged by the college.

Local Expenditures: Creation of an Aerospace Technology Studies Program meaningfully affects the operations of and increases expenditures for PGCC. The bill requires that initial creation of the program occur with coordination between the college and various State and local entities. On top of regular efforts required to develop a curriculum, the college must also execute memoranda of understanding with local industry partners and prepare regular reports on program progress.

In the first year of program development, PGCC estimates needing to hire one program coordinator and consulting with a subject-matter expert to develop the program curriculum. PGCC estimates cost to hire a program coordinator at approximately \$101,250 in fiscal 2025, which represents a \$75,000 starting salary with \$26,250 in fringe benefits (35% of salaries). PGCC also contemplates requiring over \$300,000 in consultant costs for the development of the program curriculum. These costs are in addition to any operational burdens on existing staff, who may need to shift focus to help establish the new program.

Once the program is in place, PGCC estimates, in addition to the continuation of the program coordinator position to manage marketing, enrollment, assessment, program review, and other duties associated with the new program, needing to hire two full-time faculty and three adjunct faculty members to provide instruction on the new curriculum. PGCC estimates salary for a full-time faculty member at \$75,000 and adjunct faculty salaries at \$45,000 annually, though actual costs may be higher given the technical nature of the coursework.

In addition to the staffing requirements, PGCC advises that an Aerospace Technology Program likely requires expansion of the college's existing facilities. PGCC anticipates as much as \$3.0 million in expenditures in fiscal 2027 to construct and equip appropriate lab space and hangar space to appropriately provide instruction in aerospace technology. DLS advises that actual capital costs needed to establish the program can vary greatly to the extent existing facilities can be repurposed and are ultimately unknown without a finalized academic program plan.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Commerce; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Higher Education Commission; Maryland Department of Labor; Prince George's County; Department of Legislative Services

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