

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 618 (Senators Watson and Salling)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Public Ethics - Members of the General Assembly - State and Local Government
Employment Exemption**

This bill allows a member, candidate for election to, or member-elect of the General Assembly to receive earned income from an Executive Branch unit or political subdivision of the State if the compensation is derived from a transaction or relationship that the individual (1) entered into after having served at least one full elected term in the General Assembly and (2) has objectively satisfied the minimum education, licensure, and experience requirements needed for an exemption.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State governmental operations or finances.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local governmental operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The Maryland Public Ethics Law sets out requirements, prohibitions, and procedures that affect State officials in the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches of government for the purpose of maintaining people's trust in government and protecting against the improper influence and appearance of improper influence of government. The Maryland Public Ethics Law is administered by the State Ethics Commission with the Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics and the Commission on Judicial Disabilities.

Among the requirements, prohibitions, and procedures of the Maryland Public Ethics Law are provisions regarding conflicts of interest for a member, candidate for election to, or member-elect of the General Assembly.

Generally, a member, candidate, or member-elect of the General Assembly is prohibited from receiving earned income from an Executive Branch unit or a political subdivision of the State. However, a member, candidate, or member-elect of the General Assembly may receive an exemption from the Joint Ethics Committee if the earned income is for: (1) educational instruction provided by the member, candidate, or member-elect; (2) a position that is subject to a merit system hiring process; (3) a human services position; or (4) a career promotion, change, or progression that is a logical transition from a pre-existing relationship, as specified. The prohibition does not apply to compensation derived from (1) employment as a nonelected law enforcement officer or a fire or rescue squad worker or (2) a transaction or relationship that existed before the individual filed a certificate of candidacy for election to the General Assembly (as a nonincumbent) or was not appointed to fill a vacancy.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: HB 636 (Delegate Harrison, *et al.*) - Government, Labor, and Elections.

Information Source(s): State Ethics Commission; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 18, 2026
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Analysis by: Kayvon Samadani

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510