



**State of Maryland**  
**Department of State Police**  
Government Affairs Section  
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

**POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

**DATE:** March 16, 2022

**BILL NUMBER:** Senate Bill 949                      **Position:** Letter of Information

**BILL TITLE:** Police Officers – Education Requirements – Certification and Scholarships

**REVIEW AND ANALYSIS:**

This legislation seeks to establish college degree requirements for new police employees hired after the effective date of the bill. Specifically, the police employee shall have an Associates of Arts (AA) degree prior to their initial certification as a police officer and shall obtain a Bachelor's Degree within six years or they may not be recertified as a police officer. This legislation also requires law enforcement agencies to provide work-related administrative leave to police officers to obtain the required degrees as well as develop and implement policies for recruitment at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Under current law, an applicant, to be a police officer, must be a United States citizen, have a valid driver's license, be 21 years old prior to graduation from the police academy, meet certain physical fitness requirements and pass a background check prior to being hired for the police officer position. The Commission's only educational requirement for an applicant is to be a high school graduate or earn a Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED).

This legislation will require new law enforcement officers to hold, at minimum, an AA Degree to be certified as a police officer. The Degree mandate does not require a major that is relevant to law enforcement. While some agencies currently require an AA Degree to be qualified for consideration for employment, not all do. The DSP does offer an AA degree as part of our academy instruction, but it is the employee's choice whether or not to participate in the additional school work.

There are many reasons why an applicant chooses not to obtain a degree beyond high school. Some choose to enter the work force immediately, whether for family and financial reasons or interest in a specific field. For example, many choose to enter the trades or the military, neither require a college degree.

Senate Bill 949 does not consider the burden it imposes on the officer and the agency. The agency must provide "reasonable work-related administrative leave" to the officer who is attempting to satisfy the education requirement. Reasonable is not defined. Does that mean time to attend classes, commute to and from classes, do outside classroom work? Does it take into account the requirements an officer has to their family or community that may not be able to be satisfied with this additional workload? While the bill does give the police officer six years to work the schooling into their schedule, the legislation does not provide for the agency that has to pay overtime for another officer to cover the students shift.

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In a time when recruitment of candidates to be police officers is already difficult and diversity is a goal, this legislation will make it harder for law enforcement agencies to recruit a talented and diverse workforce. While education is important, a degree does not equate to ability. Just as there are many people with a college diploma who never apply their degree in the field in which they work, there are just as many people who do not pursue a formal education that excel at their chosen profession.

This legislation will prevent some people who are interested in serving the communities in which they live from choosing a career in law enforcement. It will also require the decertification/termination of a police officer who chose to serve their communities rather than complete the Bachelor's degree requirements.