



Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

March 9, 2023

Committee: House Appropriations

Bill: HB 1126 - Local Law Enforcement - Recruitment and Hiring - Bonus Grants

Position: Support with Amendment

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League supports House Bill 1126 with amendment, to remove the five municipalities specifically identified as excluded from the benefits of the bill. We expect the grant funding provided in the bill to benefit recruitment practices of municipal police departments and believe all municipal departments should be eligible.

The proposed amendment below would leave the crux of the bill intact but would eliminate the reference to specific municipal police agencies that are ineligible to receive grant funding from this program. Importantly, the restriction on municipal departments that offered a signing bonus within the past fiscal years would remain in the bill. This may capture the municipalities listed in the bill, but it will not identify them directly:

On page 2, line 1:

(B) THE FOLLOWING LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR A GRANT UNDER THIS SECTION:

(1) A POLICE DEPARTMENT OF A MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OR A SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT THAT, IN THE PREVIOUS 5 FISCAL YEARS, HAS PROVIDED A SIGN-ON BONUS OF MORE THAN \$20,000 PER NEW POLICE OFFICER HIRE; AND

~~(2) THE POLICE DEPARTMENTS OF:~~

~~(I) BALTIMORE CITY;~~

~~(II) BOWIE;~~

~~(III) COLLEGE PARK;~~

~~(IV) GREENBELT; AND~~

~~(V) LAUREL.~~

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There are 88 municipal police departments in Maryland and at some point there have been challenges with police officer recruitment and retention in every part of the State; this problem seems to be particularly pervasive at the moment. Some police departments use signing bonuses as a tool to improve officer recruitment, but of course it must be part of the department's budget. This bill provides grant funding for local police departments that can be used only for officer signing bonuses to help defray the cost of this recruitment tool.

The grant funding established in HB 1126 is a proactive method for the State to assist local police departments recruit top talent. For this reason, the League respectfully requests that this committee provide a favorable report on House Bill 1126 with the above amendment.

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