

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

Senate Bill 1229 (Senator Robinson)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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Public Institutions of Higher Education - Family Members of Killed or Disabled  
First Responders - Tuition Exemption (Sean Suiter Act)

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This bill establishes a tuition waiver at public institutions of higher education for a “family member” of a “qualifying first responder” who was killed or significantly disabled in the line of duty. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2018.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Higher education tuition revenues decrease, potentially significantly, for tuition waivers granted beginning in FY 2019. Higher education expenditures increase at Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) by an indeterminate amount annually; any impact on expenditures at public four-year institutions is assumed to be minimal.

**Local Effect:** Tuition revenues at community colleges decrease for tuition waivers granted beginning in FY 2019. Community college expenditures increase annually by an indeterminate amount. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Bill Summary:** A “family member” is defined as a spouse, domestic partner, or child.

“Qualifying first responder” is defined as a State or local firefighter, emergency medical technician, rescue squad member, law enforcement officer, correctional officer, or sworn member of the Office of the State Fire Marshal who, while in the line of duty, died or was disabled and can no longer work as a first responder.

## **Current Law:**

### *Edward T. and Mary A. Conroy Memorial Scholarship*

The Edward T. and Mary A. Conroy Memorial Scholarship awards postsecondary education financial assistance to several categories of students – including a child, stepchild, or surviving spouse of members of the U.S. Armed Forces or State or local public safety employees who died in the line of duty or suffered a 100% permanent disability sustained in the line of duty. The child or surviving spouse of a victim of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks is also eligible for an Edward T. Conroy Memorial Scholarship. A “State or local public safety employee” is defined as a career or volunteer member of a fire department, ambulance company or squad, or rescue company or squad; a law enforcement officer; a correctional officer; or a member of the Maryland National Guard who was a resident of this State at the time of death. Individuals eligible for a scholarship must be awarded at least \$3,000 annually to attend a postsecondary institution in the State for five years of full-time study or eight years of part-time study.

Postsecondary institutions verify eligibility and award scholarships to eligible students. In October and February of each year, each postsecondary institution must report to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) the number of students eligible for an Edward T. Conroy Memorial Scholarship. After verifying the number of eligible students for the program, MHEC must allocate the funds for awards to the postsecondary institutions. If funds cannot be allocated in the fiscal year in which awards are made, priority must be given to allocating funds for those awards in the following fiscal year.

An applicant must be a resident of Maryland or have been a resident of the State at the time of the event that made the applicant primarily eligible for the scholarship. Likewise, an applicant must be accepted for admission or enrolled in the regular undergraduate, graduate, or professional program at an eligible institution or be enrolled in a two-year terminal certificate program in which the course work is acceptable for transfer credit for an accredited baccalaureate program.

Awards may not exceed tuition and mandatory fees of a full-time undergraduate Maryland resident at a four-year institution within the University System of Maryland, other than the University of Maryland University College and the University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus, with the highest annual expenses for a full-time resident undergraduate. Awards also may not be less than \$3,000 or the equivalent annual tuition and mandatory fees of the institution attended by the recipient of the scholarship, whichever is the least. Scholarships may be used at private or public four-year institutions or community colleges, and they may be used for undergraduate or graduate study.

## **Background:**

### *Sean Suiter*

Sean Suiter was a 43-year-old Baltimore Police detective who died after being shot in the head while on duty in 2017. The case is currently unsolved. The 13-year force veteran was the father to five children. According to the *Baltimore Sun*, Suiter was born and raised in Washington, DC. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1992 and served on active duty until 1998. He remained in the Army Reserves and served in Operation Iraqi Freedom from May 2005 to January 2007.

### *Killed or Disabled First Responders*

The number of family members of first responders killed or significantly disabled in the line of duty is unknown. However, according to memorial websites, there have been [42 State Police](#) killed in the line of duty since 1921 and [300 local police](#) killed in the line of duty. A list of firefighters and specified other fallen heroes can be found on the website of the Maryland Fire Rescue Services Memorial. There have also been correctional officers, emergency medical technicians, and rescue squad members killed or disabled in the line of duty.

### *Conroy Scholarship*

The Governor's proposed fiscal 2019 budget includes \$1.2 million for the Edward T. and Mary A. Conroy scholarship.

Although Conroy scholarships generally cover up to annual tuition and mandatory fees of the institution attended by the recipient of the scholarship, there are other costs associated with attending an institution of higher education, including room and board.

**State Fiscal Effect:** Higher education tuition revenues decrease beginning in fiscal 2019 due to establishing the waiver program for specified family members of killed or significantly disabled first responders. Higher education expenditures also increase due to additional enrollments, if any, at BCCC; the amount cannot be determined as it depends on the number of credits each recipient chooses to enroll in. The impact on expenditures at public four-year institutions is assumed to be minimal as they can control their enrollment.

The average proposed annual tuition and fees for full-time resident undergraduates at public four-year institutions for fall 2018 (fiscal 2019) is \$9,618. The actual amount of the revenue decrease per full-time equivalent student (FTES) may be less depending on the number of credits attempted per recipient and the distribution of institutions that waiver recipients choose to attend.

It is unknown how many family members will meet the eligibility requirements; however, *for informational purposes*, according to MHEC data, during the 2015-2016 academic year, 122 individuals received Conroy scholarships to attend a public four-year institution of higher education. Scholarship recipients at public four-year institutions of higher education received an average of approximately \$7,800 per recipient. In addition, 12 Conroy recipients attended a private four-year institution during the 2015-2016 academic year. Recipients who currently choose to attend a private institution may choose to attend a public four-year institution instead if eligible for the waiver established by this bill. However, Conroy recipients include several categories of individuals who would not qualify for the waiver established by the bill.

Tuition revenues may also decrease at BCCC, the only State-operated community college, by an estimated \$3,275 per FTES receiving a waiver based on fall 2017 (fiscal 2018) rates of \$3,196. No Conroy recipient attended BCCC during the 2015-2016 academic year.

Future year revenue losses are dependent on the number of additional recipients who are eligible for a waiver and choose to use it, the number of credits attempted per student, the distribution of institutions that waiver recipients choose to attend, and tuition and fee rates.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** Tuition revenues at locally operated community colleges decrease beginning in fiscal 2019. The impact may be significant for an individual college, but it cannot be reliably quantified. The average annual tuition and fees for full-time in-county students at the community colleges for fall 2017 (fiscal 2018) is \$4,400; tuition and fees for fall 2018 (fiscal 2019) have not been approved yet. The actual amount of the revenue decrease per FTES may be less depending on the number of credits attempted per student and the distribution of institutions waiver recipients choose to attend and may vary each year. According to MHEC data, 25 Conroy recipients attended a community college during the 2015-2016 academic year at an average cost of \$3,285. However, Conroy recipients include several categories of individuals who would not qualify for the waiver established by the bill. Community college expenditures also increase, as discussed above, but the amount cannot be determined.

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## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** HB 624 (Delegate Ali, *et al.*) - Ways and Means.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Association of Counties; Maryland Higher Education Commission; Baltimore City Community College; University System of Maryland; St. Mary's College of Maryland; Department of Budget and Management; Department of State Police; *Baltimore Sun*; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 16, 2018  
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