

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1044 (Delegate Young, *et al.*)
 Judiciary and Appropriations

Criminal Procedure - Crime Solvers Reward Fund - Establishment

This bill establishes the Crime Solvers Reward Fund as a special fund in, and administered by, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS). The stated purpose of the fund is to provide grants to law enforcement agencies or county reward programs to issue rewards to individuals who provide “qualifying information” to a law enforcement agency relevant to the investigation of a murder or an attempted murder involving a firearm. DPSCS must adopt implementing regulations and submit a related annual report.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$1.1 million in FY 2024 to capitalize and administer the fund, under the assumptions discussed below; future years reflect annualization, ongoing costs, and continued capitalization. Special fund revenues increase by \$1.0 million annually, reflecting receipt of the capitalization funds; special fund expenditures increase correspondingly to provide grants.

(\$ in millions)	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
SF Revenue	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0
GF Expenditure	\$1.1	\$1.1	\$1.1	\$1.1	\$1.1
SF Expenditure	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0
Net Effect	(\$1.1)	(\$1.1)	(\$1.1)	(\$1.1)	(\$1.1)

Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: Local revenues and expenditures increase beginning in FY 2024 to the extent that local jurisdictions apply for and are awarded grants from the fund.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The fund consists of money appropriated in the State budget to the fund, money made available to the fund through federal programs or private contributions, interest earnings of the fund, and any other money from any other source accepted for the benefit of the fund. The fund may only be used to award grants to a law enforcement agency or a county reward program in order for the law enforcement agency or county reward program to provide reward money to individuals who provide a law enforcement agency with qualifying information relevant to the investigation of a murder or an attempted murder involving a firearm.

For an individual to be eligible for a reward from a law enforcement agency or a county reward program, the law enforcement agency or county reward program must establish that the individual (1) provided credible qualifying information; (2) did not directly participate in the crime; and (3) cooperated with the law enforcement agency.

DPSCS must adopt regulations to carry out the bill's provisions; the regulations must include (1) criteria explaining how eligible law enforcement agencies and county reward programs may apply for funding from the fund and (2) criteria for the distribution of available funds.

By October 1, 2024, and each year thereafter, DPSCS must report to the General Assembly on (1) the number of rewards issued by law enforcement agencies and county reward programs in accordance with the bill and (2) the total amount of money provided under the bill.

“Qualifying information” means information provided to a law enforcement agency that directly leads to the identification, arrest, and conviction of the perpetrator of a crime.

Current Law: State law does not contain any provisions establishing a reward for information to solve a crime. However, statutory provisions exist for crime prevention program proposals by nonprofit organizations under the Neighborhood and Community Assistance Program within the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Also, current law requires circuit courts to impose additional court costs of \$45 per case on criminal defendants convicted of a crime. The District Court imposes additional costs of \$35 per case on criminal defendants convicted of a crime. The additional costs are deposited into various funds, including the State Victims of Crime Fund, the Victim and Witness Protection and Relocation Fund, and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund.

State Expenditures:

Crime Solvers Reward Fund – Capitalization

Although the bill does not establish a mandated appropriation to the fund and does not otherwise indicate an intended level of funding for the grant program, this analysis assumes that \$1.0 million annually is needed to operate a viable grant program. Thus, general fund expenditures increase by \$1.0 million annually beginning in fiscal 2024 to capitalize the fund. As funding for the grant program is discretionary, the actual amount appropriated to the fund in any given year may vary from this estimate.

Special fund revenues to and expenditures from the fund increase correspondingly, reflecting receipt of the capitalization funds and spending from the fund to provide grants.

This analysis assumes that general funds are needed to capitalize the fund, as the availability of any funding from federal programs or private contributions, which are also authorized revenue sources for the fund, is unknown. To the extent other sources of funding are available, the need for general funds for capitalization may decrease.

Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services – Administrative Expenses

The bill does not explicitly state that the special fund can be used to pay for the costs incurred by DPSCS to administer the fund, so this analysis assumes that additional general funds are needed to cover such costs. Therefore, general fund administrative expenditures increase by \$81,473 in fiscal 2024, which accounts for the bill’s October 1, 2023 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one grant specialist to administer the fund. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Position	1.0
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$74,064
Operating Expenses	<u>7,409</u>
FY 2024 DPSCS Admin. Expenditures	\$81,473

Future year expenditures reflect a full salary with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

Local Fiscal Effect: Local revenues and expenditures increase beginning in fiscal 2024 to the extent that local jurisdictions apply for and are awarded grants from the fund. Assuming local law enforcement agencies and county reward programs are the primary grant recipients, based on the anticipated funding available for grant awards (as discussed above), a total of \$1.0 million – across all jurisdictions – is provided in grants each year.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore, Charles, and Garrett counties; City of Laurel; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 3, 2023
rh/lgc

Analysis by: Shirleen M. E. Pilgrim

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