

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 438 (Delegates Hornberger and D. Jones)
Environment and Transportation

Fishing Licenses and Stamps - Fee Exemptions - Residents Eligible for Assistance Programs

This bill makes residents that are eligible for specified assistance programs (the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children; or Medicaid) exempt from the fees for an angler’s license, a trout stamp, and a Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund revenues decrease, potentially significantly, beginning in FY 2025. *Under one set of assumptions*, the decrease in annual special fund revenues is at least approximately \$800,000. Expenditures are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Current Law: Subject to certain exceptions:

- any person age 16 or older must secure an angler’s license to fish in the nontidal waters of the State;
- a person may not fish or possess trout in an area established by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as an area where a trout stamp is required, unless the person first obtains a trout stamp in addition to an angler’s license; and

- a person may not fish for finfish in the Chesapeake Bay or in its tributaries up to tidal boundaries or in State waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the Atlantic coastal bays and their tributaries without first obtaining a Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license or a specified registration.

The fees for annual resident angler's and Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing licenses are \$20.50 and \$15.00, respectively. The fee for a trout stamp is \$5 for residents. Lower fees apply for short-term, seven-day licenses and higher fees apply for annual nonresident licenses and for trout stamps for nonresidents.

The statutory provisions establishing the fees for angler's licenses and Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing licenses currently exempt blind persons and persons with a specified complimentary license from the fees.

State Fiscal Effect: Special fund revenues decrease, potentially significantly, beginning in fiscal 2025. The extent of the decrease cannot be reliably estimated, primarily because it is not known how many current recreational fishing licensees are eligible for one or more of the assistance programs specified in the bill. Angler's license and trout stamp revenues are deposited in the Fisheries Management and Protection Fund, and Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license revenues are deposited in the Fisheries Research and Development Fund.

For illustrative purposes, if it is assumed that the percentage of licensees who are eligible for one or more of the programs specified in the bill is roughly equivalent to the percentage of the adult population that is eligible for one or more of the programs, special fund revenues decrease by at least approximately \$800,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2025. This estimate is based on the following additional assumptions and information:

- Sales of recreational fishing licenses and stamps in fiscal 2025 and future years are similar to the level of sales reflected in recent annual sales data provided by DNR.
- The number of license fees paid decreases by a percentage roughly equivalent to the percentage of the adult population in the State that is eligible for one or more of the programs listed in the bill.
- The total number of adult individuals in the State who are eligible for one or more of the programs is not significantly higher than the total number of adult individuals in the State who are eligible for Medicaid because Medicaid has significantly higher enrollment numbers than the other programs and a significant majority of enrollees in the other programs are also enrolled in Medicaid, according to national [U.S. Census Bureau data](#).
- The number of adult individuals in the State who are eligible for Medicaid is equal to at least the number of adult individuals enrolled in Medicaid in the State.

- The number of adult individuals enrolled in Medicaid in the State is approximately 950,000, based on [U.S Department of Health and Human Services data](#).
- The number of adult individuals in the State is approximately 4,820,000, based on [U.S. Census Bureau data](#).
- The percentage of adult individuals in the State who are enrolled in Medicaid is approximately 20%.
- A 20% reduction in the recreational fishing license fee revenues reflected in recent annual sales data provided by DNR is equivalent to approximately \$800,000.

The Department of Legislative Services notes, however, that if the percentage of recreational fishing licensees who are eligible for one or more of the programs is less than the percentage of the adult population that is eligible for one or more of the programs – because the cost of the licenses is less affordable for the adult population that is eligible for one or more of the programs – then the annual decrease in special fund revenues is less than the illustrative estimate above of \$800,000.

DNR advises that it can implement the bill with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: Small businesses that sell DNR recreational fishing licenses may be meaningfully affected by a loss in revenue from license sales. A sport license agent that sells an angler’s license or Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license is entitled to retain \$1 for each license issued.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: SB 152 (Senator Bailey) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Health; Department of Human Services; Department of Natural Resources; U.S. Census Bureau; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 7, 2024
js/lgc

Analysis by: Scott D. Kennedy

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