SENATE BILL 551

F2, K3, C8 3lr0132
CF HB 546

By: **The President (By Request – Administration) and Senators Augustine, Beidle, Benson, Carter, Elfreth, Ellis, Feldman, Gile, Jackson, King, Hester, Hettleman, Kagan, Klausmeier, Muse, Rosapepe, Sydnor, Waldstreicher, M. Washington, Watson, and Zucker**

Introduced and read first time: February 6, 2023
Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

A BILL ENTITLED

AN ACT concerning

Education – Service Year Option Program – Establishment
(Serving Every Region Through Vocational Exploration Act of 2023)

FOR the purpose of establishing the Service Year Option Program; requiring the Department of Service and Civic Innovation to administer and provide staff for the Program; requiring a Program participant to work at least a certain number of hours per week and partner with an on–site mentor while working in a service placement; requiring a participating employer to pay a Program participant a certain wage; authorizing the Department to disburse a stipend of up to a certain amount to a Program participant who completes a service placement; requiring a Program participant to perform certain duties and participate in certain training and activities as part of a service placement; establishing the Service Year Option Program Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund; requiring interest earnings of the Fund to be credited to the Fund; requiring the Department to procure the services of a third–party entity to conduct an independent study and assessment of the Program and submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before a certain date; requiring the Department, on or before a certain date, to publish an online dashboard of key performance indicators shown in the report; and generally relating to the establishment of the Service Year Option Program.

BY adding to
Article – Education
Section 24–11A–01 through 24–11A–07 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 11A. Service Year Option Program”
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2022 Replacement Volume)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

EXPLANATION: **CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.**
[Brackets**]** indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Article – State Finance and Procurement
Section 6–226(a)(2)(i)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2021 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – State Finance and Procurement
Section 6–226(a)(2)(ii)170. and 171.
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2021 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

BY adding to
Article – State Finance and Procurement
Section 6–226(a)(2)(ii)172.
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2021 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Education

SUBTITLE 11A. SERVICE YEAR OPTION PROGRAM.

24–11A–01.

(A) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS INDICATED.

(B) "DEPARTMENT" MEANS THE DEPARTMENT OF SERVICE AND CIVIC INNOVATION.

(C) "FUND" MEANS THE SERVICE YEAR OPTION PROGRAM FUND.

(D) "PARTICIPATING EMPLOYER" MEANS A PUBLIC OR PRIVATE ENTITY PARTICIPATING AS AN EMPLOYER UNDER THE PROGRAM.

(E) "PROGRAM" MEANS THE SERVICE YEAR OPTION PROGRAM.

(F) "PROGRAM PARTICIPANT" MEANS AN INDIVIDUAL WHO:

(1) HAS RECEIVED A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA, GED, OR COMPARABLE PROOF OF EQUIVALENT EDUCATIONAL LEVEL WITHIN 2 YEARS BEFORE APPLYING FOR A SERVICE PLACEMENT UNDER THE PROGRAM; OR

(2) QUALIFIES FOR A SERVICE PLACEMENT UNDER ALTERNATIVE CRITERIA ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY.

(G) "SECRETARY" MEANS THE SECRETARY OF SERVICE AND CIVIC INNOVATION.

(H) "SERVICE PLACEMENT" MEANS THE JOB ASSIGNMENT DESIGNATED TO AN INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM UNDER THIS SUBTITLE.

24–11A–02.

(A) THERE IS A SERVICE YEAR OPTION PROGRAM IN THE STATE.

(B) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO:

(1) PROVIDE SERVICE PLACEMENTS TO RECENT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH SIMILAR LEVELS OF EDUCATION AS AN ADDITIONAL OPTION TO PURSUING CAREER AND TECHNICAL TRAINING OR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION;

(2) EQUIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WITH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, MENTORING, JOB TRAINING, AND OTHER SUPPORT WHILE WORKING IN HIGH–IMPACT SERVICE PLACEMENTS;

(3) HELP ADDRESS THE STATE'S GREATEST CHALLENGES BY CHANNELING THE NEXT GENERATION INTO PUBLIC IMPACT WORK; AND

(4) STRENGTHEN A PIPELINE OF TALENT INTO STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO FILL PRESENT AND FUTURE STAFFING NEEDS.

(C) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL:

(1) ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM; AND

(2) PROVIDE STAFF FOR THE PROGRAM AS PROVIDED IN THE STATE BUDGET.

24–11A–03.

(A) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL:

(1) DESIGN THE PROGRAM;

(2) IDENTIFY AND WORK WITH NONPROFIT ENTITIES WHO MAY RECEIVE GRANTS TO SERVE AS REGIONAL PROGRAM LEADERS ACROSS THE STATE;

(3) CREATE A STATEWIDE NETWORK FOR ALL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS ACROSS THE STATE;

(4) PROMOTE AND COMMUNICATE PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES TO HIGH SCHOOLS, RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND POTENTIAL PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS ACROSS THE STATE;

(5) (I) DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A CENTRAL APPLICATION PROCESS; AND

(II) ASSIST APPLICANTS WITH THE APPLICATION PROCESS;

(6) BUILD AND MAINTAIN AN ACCURATE AND UP–TO–DATE ONLINE PORTAL TO MANAGE OPENINGS FOR SERVICE PLACEMENTS;

(7) IDENTIFY PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS WHO CAN PROVIDE A WIDE ARRAY OF BENEFITS, INCLUDING MENTORING AND CAREER AND COLLEGE COACHING;

(8) TO THE EXTENT PRACTICABLE, SELECT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS THAT REFLECT THE GENDER, RACIAL, ETHNIC, AND GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY OF THE STATE; AND

(9) EVALUATE THE OVERALL OPERATIONS OF THE PROGRAM IN COLLABORATION WITH AN INDEPENDENT ENTITY.

(B) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL SET TARGETS FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPATION, INCLUDING:

(1) 200 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS IN THE FIRST YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION; AND

(2) 2000 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOURTH YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION.

(C) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL DEVELOP PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS TO ADDRESS PRIORITY ISSUES, INCLUDING:

(1) CLIMATE;

(2) EDUCATION; AND

(3) HEALTH.

24–11A–04.

(A) (1) WHILE WORKING IN A SERVICE PLACEMENT, A PROGRAM PARTICIPANT SHALL:

(I) WORK AT LEAST 30 HOURS PER WEEK; AND

(II) PARTNER WITH AN ON–SITE MENTOR WHO PROVIDES:

1. JOB TRAINING;

2. CAREER AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COUNSELING;

3. FINANCIAL LITERACY SKILLS; AND

4. ANY OTHER SUPPORT NEEDED.

(2) A PARTICIPATING EMPLOYER SHALL PAY A PROGRAM PARTICIPANT $15 PER HOUR.

(B) SUBJECT TO SUBSECTIONS (C) AND (D) OF THIS SECTION, THE DEPARTMENT MAY DISBURSE A STIPEND OF UP TO $3,000 TO A PROGRAM PARTICIPANT WHO COMPLETES A SERVICE PLACEMENT.

(C) A PROGRAM PARTICIPANT SHALL:

(1) PERFORM THE DUTIES OF THE SERVICE PLACEMENT TO THE SATISFACTION OF THE PARTICIPATING EMPLOYER AND THE DEPARTMENT;

(2) PARTICIPATE IN ALL TRAINING RELATED TO THE SERVICE PLACEMENT AND FUTURE CAREERS OR EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS; AND

(3) PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAM–WIDE EVENTS TO:

(I) EXPAND THE PARTICIPANT'S PROFESSIONAL NETWORK;

(II) MAKE CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE PROGRAM; AND

(III) TAKE ADVANTAGE OF STATE RESOURCES.

(D) AS NEEDED, THE DEPARTMENT MAY DISBURSE A PRORATED STIPEND AMOUNT ON A CASE–BY–CASE BASIS.

24–11A–05.

(A) THERE IS A SERVICE YEAR OPTION PROGRAM FUND.

(B) THE PURPOSE OF THE FUND IS TO:

(1) PROVIDE STIPENDS TO PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS; AND

(2) PAY THE COSTS TO ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM.

(C) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADMINISTER THE FUND.

(D) THE FUND IS A CONTINUING, NONLAPSING FUND THAT IS NOT SUBJECT TO § 7–302 OF THE STATE FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT ARTICLE.

(E) (1) THE STATE TREASURER SHALL HOLD THE FUND SEPARATELY AND SHALL INVEST THE MONEY IN THE FUND IN THE SAME MANNER AS OTHER STATE MONEY MAY BE INVESTED.

(2) ANY INVESTMENT EARNINGS OF THE FUND SHALL BE CREDITED TO THE FUND.

(F) THE COMPTROLLER SHALL ACCOUNT FOR THE FUND.

(G) THE DEPARTMENT:

(1) MAY ACCEPT ANY GIFT OR GRANT FROM ANY PERSON FOR THE FUND;

(2) SHALL USE ANY GIFT OR GRANT THAT IT RECEIVES FOR THE PURPOSES LISTED UNDER SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION; AND

(3) SHALL DEPOSIT WITH THE STATE TREASURER ANY GIFT OR GRANT THAT IT RECEIVES FOR THE FUND.

(H) THE FUND CONSISTS OF:

(1) MONEY APPROPRIATED TO THE PROGRAM IN THE STATE

BUDGET;

(2) GIFTS OR GRANTS RECEIVED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE FUND;

(3) INVESTMENT EARNINGS OF THE FUND; AND

(4) ANY OTHER MONEY FROM ANY OTHER SOURCE ACCEPTED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE FUND.

(I) ANY UNSPENT PORTION OF THE FUND MAY NOT BE TRANSFERRED OR REVERT TO THE GENERAL FUND OF THE STATE BUT SHALL REMAIN IN THE FUND TO BE USED FOR THE PURPOSES SPECIFIED IN THIS SUBTITLE.

(J) THE FUND IS SUBJECT TO AUDIT BY THE OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AUDITS IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2–1220 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE.

24–11A–06.

(A) (1) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL PROCURE THE SERVICES OF A THIRD–PARTY ENTITY TO CONDUCT AN INDEPENDENT STUDY AND ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAM.

(2) THE STUDY SHALL EMPLOY:

(I) RANDOM ASSIGNMENT, IF FEASIBLE AND ETHICAL; OR

(II) OTHER RESEARCH METHODS THAT ALLOW FOR THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE CAUSAL INFERENCES, IF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT IS NOT FEASIBLE AND ETHICAL IN THIS INSTANCE.

(B) ON OR BEFORE JULY 1, 2028, THE THIRD–PARTY ENTITY SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT ON ITS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNOR AND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2–1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

(C) ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER 1, 2028, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL PUBLISH AN ONLINE DASHBOARD OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS SHOWN IN THE REPORT REQUIRED UNDER SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION.

24–11A–07.

THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT

THIS SUBTITLE, INCLUDING REGULATIONS ON:

(1) THE APPLICATION PROCESS;

(2) ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS;

(3) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS; AND

(4) THE DISBURSEMENT OF STIPENDS.

Article – State Finance and Procurement

6–226.

(a) (2) (i) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, and unless inconsistent with a federal law, grant agreement, or other federal requirement or with the terms of a gift or settlement agreement, net interest on all State money allocated by the State Treasurer under this section to special funds or accounts, and otherwise entitled to receive interest earnings, as accounted for by the Comptroller, shall accrue to the General Fund of the State.

(ii) The provisions of subparagraph (i) of this paragraph do not apply to the following funds:

170. the Cannabis Public Health Fund; **[**and**]**

171. the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund**; AND**

172. THE SERVICE YEAR OPTION PROGRAM FUND.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2023.