

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1454 (Delegate Queen)
Government, Labor, and Elections

Campaign Finance - Security Expenditures - Authorization

This bill authorizes the use of campaign funds for specified security expenditures if a threat to a “protectee’s” safety arises from their activities, duties, or status as, or association with, a candidate or elected official. “Protectee” includes (1) a candidate; (2) an elected official; (3) a member of the immediate family of a candidate or elected official; and (4) a member of the staff of a candidate or elected official. Total lifetime security expenditures made on behalf of an individual who is a candidate or elected official may not exceed \$10,000. Tangible security items purchased with campaign funds must be returned to the campaign finance entity – or, if retained by the individual, the campaign finance entity must be reimbursed for the item at fair market value – within a specified time period or on the sale of real property for which the item was purchased. The treasurer of a campaign finance entity must document evidence of the threat that gave rise to the security expenditure, and a campaign finance report must include a description of the threat and supporting documentation. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The State Board of Elections (SBE) can implement the bill’s changes with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Authorized Use of Campaign Funds for a Security Expenditure

The bill authorizes a security expenditure from campaign funds if a threat to a protectee's safety arises from (1) the protectee's activities, duties, or status as a candidate or elected official or (2) the protectee's association with a candidate or elected official. "Protectee" includes (1) a candidate; (2) an elected official; (3) a member of the immediate family of a candidate or elected official; and (4) a member of the staff of a candidate or elected official.

A security expenditure may not be made (1) to pay for a firearm or (2) to a candidate or elected official's child, grandchild, great-grandchild, parent, grandparent, great-grandparent, sibling, sibling's child, or parent's sibling.

The bill expands the definition of "expenditure" under State campaign finance law to include "security expenditure". "Security expenditure" includes payment for the reasonable cost of (1) the installation and monitoring of an electronic security system; (2) personal security services; (3) reimbursing the State for goods or services necessary to provide security to a protectee; and (4) other goods or services necessary to provide security to a protectee.

Total lifetime security expenditures made on behalf of an individual who is a candidate or an elected official may not exceed \$10,000.

Return and Reimbursement of Tangible Security Items

The bill requires that a tangible item purchased through a security expenditure be returned to the campaign finance entity that purchased the tangible item, or that the individual who retains the tangible item reimburse the campaign finance entity at fair market value. The fair market value must be determined at the earlier of the time that the reimbursement is made or the time that the reimbursement is due.

For a tangible item purchased for, or a security system installed at the home or office or on the vehicle of, an immediate family member or staff of a candidate or elected official, reimbursement may be made by the candidate or elected official or the immediate family member or staff of the candidate or elected official.

The bill establishes deadlines for return or reimbursement of tangible items based on the nature of the threat:

- for a continuing threat, at the earlier of (1) within one year after the cessation of the continuing threat or (2) on the sale of the real property for which a tangible item was purchased with a security expenditure; or
- for a threat other than a continuing threat, at the earlier of (1) within one year after the end of an elected official’s term or after a candidate ceases to be a candidate or (2) on the sale of the real property for which a tangible item was purchased through a security expenditure.

“Continuing threat” means a threat to a protectee that (1) arises from the protectee’s activities, duties, or status as, or association with, a candidate or elected official and (2) has been reported to, and verified by, an appropriate law enforcement agency.

Recordkeeping and Reporting Requirements

The bill requires the treasurer of a campaign finance entity to include in the account book, for a security expenditure or reimbursement, a description of the evidence of the threat that gave rise to the security expenditure. In addition, each campaign finance report that includes a security expenditure must contain a description of the threat that necessitated the security expenditure and documentation sufficient to verify the threat on a form required by SBE.

Current Law:

“Expenditure” under State Campaign Finance Law

Under State campaign finance law, “expenditure” means a gift, transfer, disbursement, or promise of money or a thing of value by or on behalf of a campaign finance entity to (1) promote or assist in the promotion of the success or defeat of a candidate, political party, question, or prospective question at an election; (2) pay expenses associated with contesting an election; or (3) pay for the publication expense of a legislative newsletter.

State Board of Elections Regulations

Pursuant to SBE regulations, a political committee may only make expenditures that are for an electoral purpose. The regulations prohibit specified expenditures of campaign funds, including expenditures for the personal use or the personal benefit of a candidate, the candidate’s family, or any other individual. The regulations define “electoral purpose” as an action that promotes or enhances the success or defeat of a candidate, a political party, or a question in an election and would not have occurred but for the existence of the candidacy, political party, or question. It includes actions that increase the visibility or viability of a candidate, political party, or question, such as (1) appearing on campaign

material of a political or advocacy committee or organization or (2) attending charitable or political events.

Campaign Finance Entities and Reporting

Unless otherwise expressly authorized by law, all campaign finance activity for an election under the Election Law Article must be conducted through a campaign finance entity (defined as a political committee established under Title 13 of the Election Law Article). An individual may not file a certificate of candidacy or a declaration of intent until the individual establishes, or causes to be established, an authorized candidate campaign committee (a campaign finance entity authorized by the candidate to promote the candidate's candidacy). For each election in which a campaign finance entity participates, it generally must file campaign finance reports at various times prior to and after the primary and general elections, as well as an annual report. The reports must contain information required by SBE with respect to all contributions received and all expenditures made by or on behalf of the campaign finance entity during a reporting period.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Arnold H. Adja

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