

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 676
 Ways and Means

(Delegate Spiegel, *et al.*)

**Maryland Financial Empowerment Center Network Pilot Program -
 Establishment**

This bill creates the Maryland Financial Empowerment Center Network Pilot Program to establish a statewide network of financial empowerment centers in different regions of Maryland. The Comptroller’s Office must implement and administer the program, including the adoption of regulations. While the total number of centers is unspecified, each center must provide specified one-on-one financial counseling and coaching services free of charge and information (in multiple languages) on how to increase savings, pay down debt, access banking, and improve credit scores. Each financial counselor employed by a center must complete training that meets or exceeds specified criteria. For fiscal 2028 and 2029, the Governor must include in the annual budget bill an appropriation to the Comptroller’s Office in an amount sufficient to cover the costs of the program. **The bill takes effect October 1, 2026, and terminates September 30, 2029.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures for the Comptroller’s Office increase by \$135,000 in both FY 2028 and 2029. General fund expenditures may also increase in FY 2027 and 2030, but by lesser amounts, as shown and discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	101,300	135,000	135,000	33,800	0
Net Effect	(\$101,300)	(\$135,000)	(\$135,000)	(\$33,800)	\$0

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

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local government finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Each center must make the information described above available in English, Spanish, and any other language required by the Comptroller. Each financial counselor must complete training that meets or exceeds the Financial Empowerment Center Counselor Training Standards developed by the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund.

Current Law: The Comptroller's Office does not administer a similar program.

State Expenditures: The bill does not establish a mandated appropriation, nor does it specify the number of individual centers, just that they must be in different regions of the State. The Comptroller's Office advises that general fund expenditures increase by approximately \$135,000 on an annualized basis for 1.5 contractual staff (who would travel to the Comptroller's 11 regional offices) and associated costs. The pilot program could be established concurrent with the effective date of the bill and maintained until the bill's termination date – so that it is in place for as many as three full years; however, under the bill it must be in place for *at least* two years – in fiscal 2028 and 2029.

Accordingly, general fund expenditures for the Comptroller's Office increase by \$101,250 in fiscal 2027, which represents three quarters of one fiscal year, and by \$135,000 annually in both fiscal 2028 and 2029. Expenditures may continue into fiscal 2030 (\$33,750) due to the bill's September 30, 2029 termination date.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 801 of 2025 and HB 815 of 2024.

Designated Cross File: SB 518 (Senator King) - Budget and Taxation.

Information Source(s): Comptroller's Office; Department of Budget and Management; Maryland Department of Labor; Department of Legislative Services

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me/hlb

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