

**Department of Legislative Services**  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2026 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

House Bill 825 (Delegate Woods, *et al.*)  
 Government, Labor, and Elections and  
 Appropriations

**Brain Health - Guidelines, Grant Fund, and Commemorative Month (Tahjai's Law)**

This bill creates the Maryland Brain Health Grant Fund, administered by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), to provide grants to nonprofits, health care providers, local health departments (LHDs), and community-based programs to support brain health awareness, brain health screening, brain illness prevention, and brain health services. In fiscal 2028, the Governor must include \$500,000 in the annual budget bill for the fund. MDH must develop specified guidelines and recommendations related to brain health evaluation and submit related reports. The Governor must proclaim May as Brain Health and Chronic Headache Awareness Month. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** MDH general fund expenditures increase by \$500,000 annually beginning in FY 2027 to fund the Brain Health Grant Fund. MDH special fund revenues and expenditures increase accordingly to hire staff and distribute grants. General fund revenues increase minimally beginning in FY 2027 for any interest earned by the special fund. **This bill establishes a mandated appropriation for FY 2028.**

(in dollars)	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
GF Revenue	-	-	-	-	-
SF Revenue	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
GF Expenditure	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
SF Expenditure	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Net Effect	(\$500,000)	(\$500,000)	(\$500,000)	(\$500,000)	(\$500,000)

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

**Local Effect:** LHD revenues and expenditures may increase beginning in FY 2027 to the extent LHDs receive grants from the new fund.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

---

## Analysis

### Bill Summary:

#### *Brain Health Grant Fund*

“Brain health services” include prevention, evaluation, diagnosis, treatment, therapy, education, and support related to a brain tumor, chronic headache, migraine, traumatic brain injury, cerebrovascular condition, and any other neurological pain disorder.

The fund consists of money appropriated in the State budget to the fund and any other money from any other source accepted for the benefit of the fund. Any interest earnings must be credited to the general fund. Expenditures may only be made in accordance with the State budget, and the fund can only be used for:

- providing grants to nonprofit organizations, health care providers, LHDs, and community-based programs to support (1) brain health awareness activities, (2) brain health screening services, (3) brain illness prevention activities, and (4) brain health services;
- administrative expenses of MDH in administering the fund; and
- any other use determined to be appropriate by MDH after consultation with The Solid Foundation, Inc., relevant clinical experts, and patient advocacy groups.

MDH must periodically consult with stakeholders, including the Solid Foundation, Inc., regarding use of the fund. MDH must also (1) establish transparent criteria for awarding grants from the fund, (2) prioritize providing grants to support activities in underserved communities, and (3) ensure equitable geographic distribution of grants throughout the State.

#### *Guidelines and Recommendations*

MDH must collaborate with stakeholders to develop guidelines that promote the incorporation of a risk-based brain health evaluation into a routine physical examination and wellness visit. An evaluation may include a neurological assessment, an evidence-based decision tool, and a referral protocol for noninvasive imaging.

MDH must also develop recommendations (1) establishing screening intervals for brain health evaluations and (2) promoting insurance coverage parity for medically necessary brain health diagnostic tools.

### *Brain Health and Chronic Headache Awareness Month*

The designation of May as Brain Health and Chronic Headache Awareness Month must align with national Go Gray in May brain tumor awareness initiatives.

### *Reports*

By December 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, MDH must submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly that includes statewide data for the immediately preceding fiscal year on (1) brain tumor and chronic headache prevalence; (2) emergency department visits related to brain tumors and chronic headaches; (3) access to diagnostic brain imaging; and (4) barriers to brain health-related care.

By December 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, MDH must submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the use of the Maryland Brain Health Grant Fund during the immediately preceding fiscal year.

By January 1, 2027, MDH must submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly regarding the specified guidelines and recommendations related to brain health evaluations during routine physical examinations.

**Current Law:** Chapters 548 and 549 of 2011 required the Maryland State Department of Education to collaborate with MDH to develop policies and implement a program to provide concussion awareness to coaches, school personnel, students, and parents. Once removed from play, a student or youth athlete may not return to play until he or she has obtained written clearance from a licensed health care professional trained in the evaluation and management of concussions.

Chapter 731 of 2022 established the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury Alternative Therapies Fund to support MDH in studying the effectiveness of and improving access to alternative therapies for post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries in veterans.

May is National Brain Tumor Awareness month.

## **State Revenues:**

### *General Funds*

As any interest earnings from the special fund must accrue to the general fund, general fund revenues increase minimally beginning in FY 2027.

### *Special Funds*

Special fund revenues to the Brain Health Grant Fund increase by \$500,000 in fiscal 2028 to reflect the bill's mandated appropriation. To the extent discretionary funding is provided in fiscal 2027, fiscal 2029, and beyond, special fund revenues increase indeterminately. As the fund is permanent and the bill requires annual reporting on the use of the fund beginning December 1, 2026, this analysis assumes discretionary funding is provided beginning in fiscal 2027 and continues in fiscal 2029 and beyond (after the fiscal 2028 mandated appropriation).

## **State Expenditures:**

### *General Funds*

General fund expenditures increase by \$500,000 in fiscal 2028 to reflect the bill's mandated appropriation. As noted above, this analysis assumes discretionary funding is provided in fiscal 2027, fiscal 2029, and out-years.

### *Special Funds*

MDH advises that it requires two additional staff to implement the bill, specifically one part-time community health educator to administer the fund and one part-time epidemiologist to conduct data analysis and work on the guidelines and recommendations, as well as a \$50,000 annual contract in fiscal 2027 through 2029 to provide expertise in developing the guidelines and recommendations.

The Department of Legislative Services advises that one full-time health policy analyst would be better suited to handle the responsibilities. Given that the guidelines and recommendations must be completed by January 1, 2027, the staff responsible for that work can continue to conduct data analysis to submit annual reports and manage the grant program. Additionally, though medical expertise is necessary to develop the guidelines and recommendations, the bill requires collaboration with practitioners and other stakeholders that can provide such expertise.

Thus, MDH special fund expenditures increase by up to \$500,000 in fiscal 2027, which accounts for the bill's July 1, 2026 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one health policy analyst to develop guidelines and recommendations (in collaboration with stakeholders), conduct data analysis, draft reports, and administer grants. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, up to \$398,841 in grant distributions, and ongoing operating expenses.

Position	1.0
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$91,324
Funding Available for Grants	398,841
Operating Expenses	<u>9,835</u>
<b>Total FY 2027 State Expenditures</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>

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

**Additional Comments:** The bill is named for Tahjai Ward Frazier, a Maryland teacher and brain surgery survivor.

### Additional Information

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

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 11, 2026  
jg/jc

Analysis by: Eliana R. Prober

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