

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 168

(Senator Watson)

Budget and Taxation

Economic Matters

Study to Evaluate Blockchain-Based Real Property Title Recordation and Verification

This bill requires the State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT), in coordination with the Judiciary, the Department of State Police, local law enforcement agencies, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), and any third-party technology vendors to conduct a study to (1) evaluate the use of “blockchain” technology for securely recording and verifying real property ownership and (2) assess its potential use in assisting law enforcement and the courts in resolving real property disputes involving “squatting.” By December 31, 2026, SDAT must report to the Governor and General Assembly on the results of the study. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any potential minimal costs associated with the workgroup are not anticipated to materially affect State finances or operations, as discussed below.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local government operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: “Blockchain” means a distributed ledger technology that provides a secure, immutable, and transparent method of recording and storing data.

“Squatting” means the unauthorized occupation of real property by an individual who does not have legal title, a lease, or the right of possession.

Current Law: Clerks of the circuit courts are responsible for the recording of land records. Generally, the Maryland Uniform Real Property Electronic Recording Act – Title 3, Subtitle 7 of the Real Property Article – establishes that requirements for documents to be signed as a condition for recording are met by an electronic document or electronic signature under specific circumstances. The Act also requires the clerks of the circuit courts and SDAT to coordinate with appropriate entities on procedures and processes to facilitate the electronic satisfaction of prior approvals and conditions precedent to recording documents or the electronic payment of fees or taxes.

State Expenditures: OAG advises that the bill likely results in an increase in workload to provide guidance to SDAT during the course of the study, thus requiring one part-time contractual assistant Attorney General. The Department of Legislative Services advises that the bill does not necessitate additional staff for OAG.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: HB 810 (Delegate Taylor, *et al.*) - Economic Matters.

Information Source(s): Department of Information Technology; Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Frederick, Montgomery, and Somerset counties; Office of the Attorney General; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of State Police; State Department of Assessments and Taxation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 20, 2026
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