

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 93 (Delegate Rosenberg)
Appropriations

Walter Sondheim Jr. Public Service Internship Scholarship Program - Repeal of Award Cap

This bill repeals the \$3,000 cap for awards made under the Walter Sondheim Jr. Public Service Internship Scholarship Program. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. Repealing the scholarship award cap of \$3,000 for the Sondheim scholarship does not affect the amount of funds appropriated for the program; thus, expenditures are not affected. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: Chapter 490 of 2007 established the Walter Sondheim Jr. Public Service Summer Internship Scholarship Program to assist college and graduate students with exploring public service career opportunities through summer internships. Chapter 397 of 2015 expanded the Sondheim scholarship from a summer program to include fall and spring internships and renamed it accordingly. Priority for participation in the program must be given to eligible students who (1) are residents of the State; (2) have demonstrated interest in careers in public service; and (3) assist in providing legal services to low-income State residents, social work services to low-income State residents, nursing services in nursing shortage areas, or other services in the public or nonprofit sectors in

which there is a shortage of qualified practitioners for low-income or underserved residents or areas of the State.

The Shriver Center at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) administers the program and serves as a clearinghouse for public and nonprofit entities that wish to hire interns from the program. The program is supported with State general fund appropriations to UMBC. Chapter 251 of 2016 established that scholarships awarded under the program must be at least \$2,000 and no more than \$3,000, subject to the availability of funds.

The Shriver Center advises that removing the \$3,000 award cap for the Sondheim scholarship will give the center flexibility to increase the stipend as funds become available. Further, increasing the award, if funds are available, will help the program to continue to attract top students, especially as the minimum wage increases.

While it is authorized to make fall and spring awards, the center advises that it currently only makes summer awards so as not to take away from the cohort experience for the students. In 2018, the center made 45 summer stipend awards at \$3,000 each for a total stipend cost of \$135,000. The stipends are for 400 hours, which is \$7.50 per hour. Given that the Maryland minimum wage has increased to \$10.10 per hour, the center would like to increase stipends to continue to attract top students and address equity issues if funding becomes available. If additional funding does not become available, under the bill, larger stipends could be made if fewer stipends are awarded. Alternatively, the same number of \$3,000 awards could continue to be made.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Higher Education Commission; Shriver Center; Department of Legislative Services

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