



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

FISCAL NOTE

HOUSE BILL NO. 397

PRINTERS NO. 3603

PRIME SPONSOR: Owlett

COST / (SAVINGS)

FUND	FY 2022/23	FY 2023/24
General Fund	See Fiscal Impact	See Fiscal Impact

SUMMARY: House Bill 397, Printer's Number 3603, amends Title 35 (Health and Safety) with several omnibus changes related to grant programs, required studies and providing for the Active Volunteer Tuition and Loan Assistance program.

ANALYSIS: This bill amends Title 35 (Health and Safety) with several omnibus amendments and changes related to the following sections:

Sections 5602 and 5604 – extends the expiration date of the Nonprofit Security Grant Program from 2024 to 2029.

Section 7383 – Provides that the Office of State Fire Commissioner shall use the \$250,000 directed in Act 74 of 2022 for a public safety campaign on the precautions of using fireworks. The office may use up to \$50,000 for administrative costs.

Section 7383.1 – Requires the Office of State Fire Commissioner to develop a fire and emergency services training and education certification management system. The system must also incorporate training records and allow a trainee to download and print a certificate of completion. The system shall provide access to all available training courses through an internet website. A fee of not more than \$1 per course may be established to be used for administration within the office.

Section 7385.1 – Provides that the Office of State Fire Commissioner administer capital grants in an amount totaling \$500,000 as provided in Act 74 of 2022 to municipal and combination fire departments to be used for modernization of facilities that house equipment or vehicles, acquire or renovate structures to house equipment or vehicles or repair or purchase equipment. The office may use up to \$50,000 for administrative costs.

Section 7385.2 – Provides that the Office of State Fire Commissioner administer capital grants in the amount totaling \$500,000 as provided in Act 74 of 2022 for EMS training centers for modernization of facilities that house equipment or vehicles, acquire or renovate structures to

house equipment or vehicles or repair or purchase equipment. The office may use up to \$50,000 for administrative costs.

Section 7388.1 – Provides that the Office of State Fire Commissioner utilize \$250,000 made available in Act 74 of 2022 for online training for firefighters.

Section 7389 – Provides for \$500,000 made available in Act 74 of 2022 for reimbursement to bomb squads for the removal, transportation, storage and destruction of fireworks. The Office of State Fire Commissioner may utilize up to 3% of these funds for administrative costs.

Section 7419.1 – Extends the date for the Fire Relief Formula Study being compiled by the State Fire Advisory Board until December 31, 2023.

Section 7813 – Increases the maximum grant awards to fire companies from the Fire Company Grant program from \$15,000 to \$20,000 per fire company. It also increases, from 10 years to 20 years, the amount of time in which consolidated companies may receive grants amounts not exceeding the amount each company would have received before consolidation. The legislation provides that when a fire and EMS company consolidate, the consolidated entity may receive grant awards of not more than the amount received prior to consolidation for 20 years.

Section 7823 – Increases the maximum grant awards to EMS companies from the Emergency Medical Services Grant program from \$10,000 to \$15,000 per EMS company. The legislation provides that when a fire and EMS company consolidate, the consolidated entity may receive grant awards of not more than the amount received prior to consolidation for 20 years.

Section 79A24 – Allows a governing body to expand the process by which a municipality may reject a tax credit claim to include adoption of a resolution.

Section 8112.1 – Provides \$1,000,000 made available in Act 74 of 2022 for the Department of Health to provide scholarships to EMS providers who completed EMS training, reimburse EMS agencies for recruitment and retention cost and make available a pilot program for high school students to increase the number of individuals capable of becoming EMS providers. The department may use up to \$50,000 for administrative costs.

House Bill 397 adds Chapter 79B that provides for the Active Volunteer Tuition and Loan Assistance program. The program requires eligible participants to be an active volunteer at least one year prior to submitting an application, be enrolled in an approved institution of higher learning and commit to serving for five years after completing the approved educational program. Full-time student participants shall be eligible to receive \$1,000 per academic year, and part-time students' assistance shall be eligible for an amount not to exceed \$500 per academic year. A student may not receive assistance for a total of more than five academic years. The program requires the chief of the volunteer company to maintain service logs to document the participation of the applicant. The legislation establishes the Active Volunteer Tuition and Loan Assistance Program Fund that receives \$1,000,000 as provided in Act 74 of 2022. The Office of State Fire Commissioner may utilize an amount not exceeding 3.5% of dedicated funds for administrative costs.

Amendments to Sections 7813(b)(3) and 7823(b)(3) shall take effect in 60 days, while the rest of the bill is effective immediately.

FISCAL IMPACT: Enactment of this legislation will have no adverse fiscal impact on Commonwealth funds. The provisions of this legislation provide for programs to utilize the funding directed under Act 74 of 2022. The funding provided in Act 74 that is directed in this legislation is as follows:

- \$1,000,000 – Active Volunteer Tuition and Loan Assistance Program;
- \$1,000,000 – EMS personnel training scholarships and reimbursement;
- \$500,000 – Fire department capital grants;
- \$500,000 – EMS department capital grants;
- \$500,000 – Bomb squad reimbursement;
- \$250,000 – Fireworks public safety campaign; and
- \$250,000 – Online training of fire fighters.

This legislation also increases the upper grant limit for the Fire Company Grant program and the EMS Company Grant program. Grants are awarded on a pro-rata basis if total dollar amount applied for by eligible companies is greater than the total amount provided. This change will have no impact on Commonwealth funds as no changes are made to the amounts provided to the programs from the State Game Fund or Property Tax Relief Fund.

House Bill 397 also provides for the Office of the State Fire Commissioner to assess a fee of up to \$1 per course for online training. The commissioner's training data for FY 2020-21 indicated 78,000 course registrations were made for training courses offered. Assuming that a similar number of course registrations occur in future years, the fee would provide \$78,000 of additional revenue per year. The OSFC has also indicated that the current IT system used by the office can be used to implement the provisions of the bill, and the anticipated fee revenue would cover any additional upgrade costs that are necessary.

The extension of the Nonprofit Security Grant Fund will have no fiscal impact on Commonwealth funds as allocations to the fund are provided by appropriations made by the General Assembly.

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Estimates are calculated using the best information available. Actual costs and revenue impact incurred may vary from estimates.